

Youth ! Arise, Awake and Adopt the Right Path of Life

(A compact Self-Guide for the modern students and youth on the "Right Path of Life" for laying a proper and strong foundation of life during their youth period and for living a successful, purposeful, prosperous, happy and peaceful human life upon this earth plane)

Volume - 10

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This book is meant for free distribution amongst the modern students and youth, with a fervent prayer to them to kindly study the book earnestly and carefully and put the knowledge gained from the teachings contained in the lessons of the book into practice in their day-to-day life sincerely and diligently, for their own highest good and supreme welfare.

Views of Students and Youth, Teachers and Professors, Educationists and Academicians, School, College and University Administrators, Editors of News Papers and all other Readers, on this book are humbly and earnestly invited in the following address:-

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PART - D

GRAND OBJECTS OF ASPIRATION
OF IDEAL HUMAN LIFE

LESSON - 8

INDIAN CULTURE (Bharatiya Sanskruti)

INDIAN CULTURE

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

MY CONCEPT OF CULTURE

We often hear and speak of ancient culture, modern culture, a cultured person, cultured behaviour, and the like, evidently with some faint feeling that it is good to be cultured. This will naturally mean that culture is that which is related to the good, which springs from the good, and also promotes the good.

Without entering into a discussion of the nature of the good, a knowledge of which, no doubt, is essential to have any idea of what true culture is, we may safely say that culture is the result of an understanding, or at least of a real aspiration for an understanding, of the position of man in the world.

Culture is tilling, cultivating, refining, "the working of the ground in order to raise crops," the condition consequent upon the development and strengthening of inherent powers and capacities — physical, mental, moral or spiritual — the transformation of human nature into a methodical structure of proportion and completeness, conducive to and responsible for the peace and happiness not only of an individual but of mankind as a whole. A certain type of education lies at the background of culture. Culture refers to whatever is the best and the highest that is capable of being known.

Purpose of Existence

We hear so much about the ancient culture of India. And what are the characteristics of this culture? We know that almost every country in the world thinks in terms of power and pelf,

while we in India are taught to give more stress on the principles of right morality, and evaluate life in the light of the reality of a universal Spirit existing behind all things. Unselfishness and self-abnegation are placed first, and then the activities of life follow.

The system of education, the concept of values, the rules of society, the aim of politics, the laws of the country, are all emanations from this comprehensive idea of the purpose of existence, which manifests itself in the endeavours for dharma, artha, kama and moksha — a technique of living an integrated life in every sphere of human activity. There is a spiritual psychology behind education and life.

If we take this pattern of culture as a standard, it follows that the essence of true culture is in its being based on a spiritual sense of values and an integral outlook of life. The assertion of the divinity of man is its heart, and it rests on inner refinement, on the nurture and unfoldment of the spiritual spark in man. Right aspiration is the longing for Atma-swarajya or freedom in the universality of the Self, attainable through the conquest of the internal and the external nature. Self-realisation becomes the goal.

Gospel of Life

The gospel of life, is a gospel of non-attachment, of the immortality of the soul, of the ultimate liberation of the soul in the Cosmic. This is the teaching of the all inclusive inwardness of existence. The indispensability of non-attachment becomes obvious from the concept of the oneness of life, of the unity of the universe. If truth is one, attachment to outward forms is another name for clinging to phenomena and a breach of truth, the inevitable result of which is misery. Culture tends to freedom, and freedom is only in non-personal life.

Unselfishness and inward peace, or at least an effort to achieve this end, should mark the distinctive feature of culture if

it should last, and have any permanent significance. Knowledge which characterises such culture is not mere learning but faith and insight, with an ethical background. This is not possible without freedom of the mind from prejudice and from craving for things that perish.

Culture is synonymous with the blossoming of the faculty of the spiritual consciousness in different degrees, and by stages. Higher than the animal man is the normal man. Higher than the normal man is the good man. Higher still is the saintly man. But, above all, is the divine man or God-man.

To act without attachment, to perform without reluctance one's duties according to the station in which one is placed in society by one's capacity and aptitude and destiny, and to be inwardly unified with the Divine Being, even while devoted to a household life, is what constitutes the way to peace. The 'sthithaprajna' of the Bhagavadgita is the Indian ideal of the highest type of culture.

Transfiguration

In a general sense, culture includes such processes as bodily training, the discipline of the psychological faculties, the development of the consciousness of right and wrong and good and bad etc., which go by the names of physical culture, mental or intellectual culture, will-culture, memory-culture, thought-culture, moral and ethical culture and the like. For culture is a progressive transfiguration of nature, a creative activity of the evolving mind of man to approximate itself to perfection, so far as it is possible for it with the knowledge and energy with which it is endowed at a given level of life.

The individual is neither a body merely nor only a mind. The human individual, at least, is a composite structure, a complex

of physical forces, vital urges, emotional stresses, moral aspirations and rational needs. Nothing that does not comprehend these in its compass or contribute to the training and development of these aspects can be called an integral culture.

Culture is the reflection of the soul in man, and it is complete in proportion as it answers to the original, viz., internal perfection. Pure thought, decent speech, nobility of character, impartial love, truthfulness, honesty, straightforwardness, forbearance — such virtues as these are, therefore, the natural insignia of right culture, which can be regarded as an index of self-fulfilment.

Steps to Perfection

According to Patanjali, perfection is a state that can be reached by Yoga steps — harmony in the body, (asana: bodily perfection), harmony in the vital forces (pranayama), harmony in the senses (pratyahara), and harmony in the mind (samyaama), which, to realise fully, has to be extended to family, society, nation and the world at large. All this is rooted in ethical discipline (yama-niyama). Here we have a statement of the highest conception of culture, and anything else that we say in this regard is only a commentary on this inviolable truth of the very profound relation between man, world and God.

It is now obvious that true culture is impossible without one's having a definite aim of life. Hindu scriptures speak of four aims—dharma, artha, kama and moksha referring to the moral, economic, vital and spiritual values that govern our very existence every moment. Here is a complete scheme of life, the anatomy of the background of a permanent culture.

The principle of rita and satya (both terms meaning 'truth'), as enunciated in the Rig-Veda, should be enough to enable us to

mould ourselves into any pattern of culture. For rita is the unalterable law of the unity of the cosmos, and satya is its relative manifestation in life, which takes into consideration the evolutionary structure of creation and the law of action and reaction that regulates it.

The range of this satya as the determining power in creation is wide enough to include all the laws of the world. In the moral realm it can be crystallized into the 'categorical imperative' of the five yamas or 'restraints' (vide : Patanjali's Yoga-sutras).

Inner Value

Culture is not diplomatic tactics, shrewdness to put on appearances, or ability to be one thing inside and another outside, in order to suit one's convenience. Culture is not opportunism, weather-cock behaviour, or any kind of refined hypocrisy. Culture is not merely confined to dress, food, gait, gesture, or knowledge of arts, sciences and languages, though these may receive some impact of good taste due to habit engendered by inward regeneration, which is the mark of culture.

Culture is not affectedness of any sort, nor superiority complex of any kind; for culture is normal life. Culture is not also just literature, music and dancing or sculpture, architecture, painting or drawing, or psychology or mathematics. It is not either the scientific advancement spectacular in the West, nor success in taking off from the pull of the earth's gravity, or going into solar orbit, nor the so-called control over nature that we hear so much today, for no control is complete or meaningful without control over oneself.

Culture may include science, art and literature, but it cannot be replaced by these in entirety. Culture is not what is

implied these days by the much abused slogan: "rule of the people, by the people, for the people", for culture cannot dispense with Truth, which cannot be identified with the group called "the people", though its common utility is of vital importance. Truth is not a matter of votes by the majority. Truth is not any one stage, or even a few stages, but includes all stages at every stage. Every situation is a universal situation. Here lies the profundity of culture, and this ensures its permanency.

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VEDIC CULTURE (SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

When Swami Vivekananda returned to India after attending the Parliament of Religions a journalist asked him: "Swamiji, you have seen the Occident, travelled for two years in different countries of the Western world, and seen their scientific progress, their technological advancement and all the wonderful progress that they have made. Now after this experience, after all that you have seen, what is your opinion of India? What do you think about our country?" Drawing himself up to his full height and looking straight into the eyes of the reporter, his voice trembling with emotion, it is said, Vivekananda said: "My friend, when I left the shores of India for the West, I loved my country, I loved India. But after my visit, after having seen the society and life there, now I know that the very soil of this country is fit to be worshipped. My mother country is a country to be adored, worshipped." Ponder on this incident which the writer reported in his biography of Swamiji. What was it that made Swami Vivekananda who was a rationalist, not an emotionalist, to make this statement? He had patriotism in abundance but predominantly and primarily he was a man with a giant intellect and very great critical faculty. There was a time when he questioned everything about his religion. There was a period in his youth when he even turned agnostic, became sceptical of the ancient truths and even doubted the very authenticity of visions and experiences of the Saint of Dakshineswar whom later on he accepted as his Worshipful Master and Guru. He was a person with a forthright nature. If he felt something, he never concealed it. So, we have to pause and ponder, what was it that made him express himself so fervently and so strongly. That was his experience of the difference in the quality of the vision, the view of life and the way of life he saw of the people practising in the occidental

society and the basic idealism that filled the life of a citizen of Bharatavarsha. He saw how by our very culture, the entire set up of our life was divinely oriented, our very approach to life was that it was not an end in itself but the means for the attainment of certain higher ends and these higher ends were idealistic.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda used to say that India is the only country in the world where God-realisation is the goal of human life. No other human society lives life in this way. Our primary purpose in life is to attain transcendental divine experience, to know the Unknown, to know That which is beyond the reach of the senses, mind and intellect. That is the supreme goal. Goals there are many, but the highest goal and purpose of human existence is the realisation of the Absolute. This human life is considered so precious because it throws open the door for that attainment and spiritual idealism in our life. It is in this connection that our ancient sages left for us, for generations to come, certain principles to live by, certain ideals to pursue and emulate and in this connection this evening as my joyful sharing and serving with you in the name of beloved and worshipful Holy Master Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji, I exercise this privilege given to me at this spiritual gathering, this fellowship here this evening, to put before you certain important aspects of our culture.

First and foremost they gave for our adoption in our life four values to strive after and as it is in the peculiar tradition of Sanskrit language they termed them as Purushartha. Purushartha means exertion. Purushartha is right exertion and the values for which you must exert they indicated by the same term, exertion, instead of using some other term implying the goal of such exertion. They have

given us the concept of Purusharthic Chatushtaya, which has come down to us from ancient times. We all know that when we take birth in this world we have a situation where we find ourselves in link with two universes. One is the invisible inner universe of the Spirit from which you have come into a material physical universe, assuming a gross material physical body to function in this universe. But prior to your advent into your gross physical material universe, you did not have this material body, you were not part of this phenomenal material universe. You were in a different state, in a different dimension, subtle, invisible, unmanifest, and naturally, therefore, you are related to it. Your present state of being conditioned by a name and a form, this body-bound state, is only for a little while, some years only. There is no definite guarantee of its duration. It varies from individual to individual and any moment there can be an abrupt conclusion of this present state and therefore, soon after this episode once again you will find yourself in that same unmanifest dimension. Therefore, our relationship to the invisible inner universe of the Spirit seems to be of a greater importance, more essential and vital than this temporary relationship with this outer material universe. This comes and goes. This has a beginning and an end. Yet, as long as we are in this embodied condition, we are related to this universe and to everything in it. It is a constant continuous involvement with this outer universe. That is within our knowledge. We are aware of 'This' than of 'That'.

Our ancients brought home the fact that you are only a passing pilgrim here. Your permanent abode is not This but That — whence you have come and whither you are bound and therefore, for the inner life also there are these twin-relationships. The relationship with this outer universe, whether

you wish it or not, is there. It is inevitable. You have to face it and do whatever it demands. This is divided into two of the values. One is you have to attend to the stern necessities of our physical life-hunger, thirst, heat, cold and other inclemencies of the weather. So you have to have, as they say, food, clothing, shelter — *Roti, Kapada, Makan* — and for this you have to exert in order to earn and provide yourself with the necessities. In this economy-oriented life on earth, money is necessary. You have to exert and earn money, whatever the ways and means may be. So exertion to earn money is allowed. This is conceded as an inevitable value and is called Artha.

At the same time, unlike other creatures, man is not satisfied merely by fulfilling the needs of his physical nature. You provide the beasts with food, water and a place they can sleep in and all their life they will be contented to live in that condition. Man has a psychological dimension to his nature wherein he has desires, ambitions, plans and schemes. He has a vital personality within which he is a thinking, feeling and reasoning being. Therefore, the sages conceded this other dimension as of secondary value. We have desires, because they are part of the psychological nature which longs for many things, and has many desires in various directions. The ancients said that you must exert to fulfil them also but then, they said, that your ultimate goal is to once again go back to the very source of your being from whence you came. They experienced this during the greatest heights of their transcendental experience that all life streams forth from one cosmic source of eternal existence. That is the source, that is the root, that is the fountain-head, the origin of all that Is and what all that Is, is something beyond our comprehension. Those who realised its magnitude, its infinity, were aghast.

They said: "*Ananta-koti Brahmanda Nayaka* — That Being is the Supreme Lord of infinite crores of universes." This universe is a grain of sand. Our planet earth, our solar system, our lunar system, our stellar system, the galaxies, all that man knows as space and the celestial objects that fill our space, is but a grain of sand. There are infinite crores of such universes in this incomprehensible magnitude of the infinitude of that Reality, and therefore, the source of all that exists, that is your original abode, that is your home. From That all beings have come into being and in that only all beings exist. It is the invisible support of your very existence. If it did not exist, you could not exist. It is That which supports you and unto That all beings are moving, unto That all beings are going forth and this transcendental experience is what the sages perceived. They said: You all have come from That, you exist in That and towards That you are moving. That is your be-all and end-all.

This process of coming into this earth existence is a journey back home to your eternal abode. So make your life a conscious effort of this glorious journey back into the Divine. In that experience, in that attainment, you will be liberated from all limitations and imperfections that are inevitable to this conditioned, finite, earth-life. Because of its very nature this world is imperfect and is bounded by life and death and in between these two inevitable terminals of an entry into this existence and exit, life is chaotic. Life does not give real contentment because it is finite, it is conditioned and is subject to change. Therefore, this imperfect life cannot give Santosha (contentment), Tripti (eternal satisfaction) and Ananda (bliss). You can be liberated from these imperfect experiences once and for all and get eternal satisfaction. These vexing, binding limitations, these shackles will not be needed anymore once you

attain that experience. Therefore, they call it liberation; liberation from all that the earth-life means to you now, body-bound condition of imprisonment. This is the goal which is to be attained. Life is a means to its attainment. Why not make a conscious process because evolution is the law of life, evolution through divine perfection. That supreme goal, Moksha-prapti (attainment of liberation), therefore, is ever to be kept in view and you must move towards it.

Earning money and satisfying or fulfilling your desires is a mundane aspect of your psychological nature. If this process takes on a contrary quality or a contrary characteristic so that the very process of attending to these two aspects of your life pull you into an opposite direction, then life itself will become a great obstacle to the attainment of perfection which is your divine destiny. It will slow down your progress towards that great goal. You must, therefore, take care that your life here, if it cannot become actually a supplement and a compliment, a supportive process, at least let it not stand as an obstacle to the attainment of your divine destiny. Let it not become an obstacle, let it not become a hampering factor.

How is one to achieve this? The sages said that the only way of achievement is by bringing into every detail your life, into these two mundane aspects — earning of wealth and the fulfillment of human desires — bringing into this process a quality which harmonises with the Divinity. God is Truth, let your life be pervaded by Truth. God is Love, let your life be pervaded by Love. God is Compassion and Grace, let your life be pervaded by Compassion. God is Purity, let your life and actions be pervaded by Purity. Thus bring into your life Truth, Purity, Compassion, Love and Goodness, everything that is auspicious, everything that is blessed, everything that is in harmony with divine goal which you are trying to attain by this

pattern of living. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for theirs shall be the Kingdom of God.

Righteousness (Dharma) is your culture, Bharatiya Sanskriti, your great heritage. Therefore conceive of Dharma as the greatest friend of the Jivatma when he is in this human world, as a human being. There is no greater wealth than Dharma. Dharma is your greatest friend. Why? It is that which will guarantee and assure that your secular life will not stand in the way of the attainment of liberation. That will assure that the quality of your outer life, the secular life, will be such that it will become part of your steady onward progress, part of your Sadhana for Moksha, part of your Sadhana for Bhagavat-sakshatkara (God-realisation). This is life of Dharma, Compassion, Kindness, Purity, Truth, Love, Wisdom and Forgiveness. This is all that we expect from God. Allah is all merciful and ever forgiving. What is God? He is the sum totality of man's concept of forgiveness, of love, of compassion and therefore what you expect from God towards your own imperfect individual being, that you project to fellow beings and all the creatures. That is why the sages gave us this value as the basic or the fundamental value of mundane life. They said: Base your entire life upon Dharma and do as you wish. Ply a trade, do a business, be a farmer, be a doctor, it will not come in your way, provided you do not desert Dharma.

Adhere to Dharma. If all that you do in this secular world to make a living are in accordance with Dharma, then you have nothing to fear. *Svalpamapyasya dharmasya tra-yate mahato bhayat* — Even a little bit of Dharma will save you from great fear. This earth-life will not become an obstacle, it will not become a bondage. On the contrary it will become a support, a supplement to your inner aspirations, your inner ascent towards this coveted goal of Moksha-prapti or liberation. *Dharmo rakshati rakshitah* — Dharma protects him who protects it.

Be helpful to your brothers and sisters. Desire to serve your own neighbour. Desire to serve the society, nation, all creatures, even plants and insects. Desire to be serviceful to all. With this vision the sages gave us the great Sutra that the very body has been given to us in order to benefit others — *Paropakarakartham idam sariram*. What a grand view about the body and what a great contrast is this view to that which prevails normally in the unenlightened and uncultured societies! They think that the body is an instrument for enjoyment.

Our culture raised the great warning: O man, beware. Senses are your enemies. They were not given to be avenues of enjoyment. They were given as windows of perception, to see the world into which God has sent you, so that by seeing the world you gain knowledge about it. We have perverted all these senses, these faculties which God endowed us with, and converted them merely into avenues of biological pleasurable sensations and animal excitement.

There is also a note of warning. They said: O man, beware. Species perish even due to being endowed by just one sense; the fish gets impelled upon the fisherman's hook through its tongue. Because of the sense of touch an elephant is caught and has to work like a slave for a whole life time. Because of the sense of vision insects are attracted towards fire and are burnt to death. Because of the sense of hearing the deer is ensnared by the hunter. Because of the sense of smell the bee is caught up in the flower. Just one sense of these various creatures takes them to their doom. What to say of man who is endowed with all these five senses? Therefore, be aware of the fact that if these senses are not properly kept at their place and made to function as they ought to function, they can become your destroyers. They can take you to your downfall. Therefore, O man! be aware of this fact and

exercise restraint and let your actions be Dharmic, let your actions not go contrary to Dharma because of this urge towards sense indulgence. These senses were not given for indulgence. Knowing this, if you determine to walk the path of Dharma, then your outer life in this universe will not stand in the way of your attaining the supreme state of liberation.

Of these four-fold values, Dharma is the basic fundamental value. Live your life according to Dharma and base all your activities upon it. All desires that come in the course of your fulfilling your duties, provided they are not contrary to Dharma, are legitimate desires. Fulfill these desires. But if a desire becomes a lower desire and degenerates into mere sense indulgence a man may lose his humanness and act as an animal, a devil.

The body was given for doing good to others. What a sublime concept of the human body which is a temple of God! God is in our heart. This is not true only about yourself but also about all beings. All beings are visible and moving temples of a living God. Therefore, have the desire to serve God through all living creatures. *Paropakarakartham idam sariram* (This body is for the benefit of others) is the great sublime concept that our sages gave us. Therefore let your life be filled with this ideal of doing good to others. Do not take this body merely as an avenue for sense satisfaction, gross sense gratification and sense indulgence. Be a man; assert and affirm the dignity of your status as a human being. You are not merely a beast, you are a rational faculty. Think and be a self-possessed being, a self-possessed creature. Manage yourself. Lead a dignified life of moderation and self-control. Moderation is the key-note of the Gita, too. All of Yoga ultimately means a discipline to control the mind and conquer the senses.

Buddha once put a question, "Who is the greater conqueror? One who takes vast armies behind him and

invades territories and subdues another kingdom and conquers it, or one who conquers one's own senses, mind and desires?" and answered it himself: "I declare to you, O Bhikkus, he is a greater conqueror who has subdued himself, who has conquered his passions, who has controlled his senses." This is our ideal. From the beginning of life, right from the student days, be a Samyami, be a self-controlled one, have self-mastery. Of the first four values which the human individual must strive after — Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha — Artha and Kama relate to this mundane world, earning your livelihood and fulfilling your desires. Moksha is the supreme spiritual value which is the true goal of life. But if it is to be attained in and through our normal life, it is possible only if our normal life is characterised and pervaded by the ideal of Dharma, that is, the ideal of truth, purity, kindness, compassion and self-restraint. Thus, Dharma became the fundamental as well as the foundational value. This is the first force which your great tradition, your great culture has given to you as your heritage.

Of the four-fold values to strive for, the highest is the spiritual value. The inevitable values are the economical as well as the vital values such as fulfilment of desire and earning of money, but they are not to turn you away from the highest value. The governing factor in all your secular life should be Dharma. While adhering to Dharma, if you lead your secular life, then Paramartha can be attained through Prapancha. Therefore, Dharma is the most important value. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha were given, therefore, as the four-fold Purusharthas for attainment of the supreme purpose of human existence — divine experience and liberation through divine perfection. To achieve this in a

spontaneous and a natural manner there are another set of four values. The sages said that at the very beginning of your life cultivate all things that are necessary to become established in Dharma.

The human life is divided into four stages. The first quarter is the Vidyarthi Jivana (student life). The second is the householders' family life, Grihasthashrama. The third is the retired man's life, Vanaprasthashrama and the fourth, the life of total dedication to Brahma Jnana — Sannyasashrama. Just as Dharma is the foundational value, the first Ashrama is the foundation stage. If in this very Ashrama you equip yourself with all that is necessary in order to live the three-quarters of your life in an ideal manner then you have nothing to fear. Therefore, as a student, acquire all that is necessary to lead an ideal life. This part of life is conceived of as being lived in an atmosphere most conducive to attaining self-control, character, virtue, right thinking and right aspirations. Go away from the foul atmosphere where there are temptations, attractions that excite the mind and make it Chanchal (oscillating). Go into a serene atmosphere and live with a person who is himself leading that ideal life, a Rishi, a Jnani or a Guru. Go to him and under his guidance lead a life of self-control. Get up early in the morning, take a cold bath, do Asanas and exercises that help to control your senses and then lead a life of self-control, moderation, moral character and conduct. Sit at your Guru's feet and learn. He will teach you all that is necessary to lead your life the ideal way. He will also give you the secular knowledge of art, craft or profession. Many Vidyas have been enumerated by our scriptures. He will teach you to ply a profession but at the same time he will also tell you what is the way of leading a righteous life. He will expound to you the secret of Dharma and then, at the same time, give you

the knowledge of the supreme goal. He will teach you Vedanta. He will give you the rudiments of spiritual knowledge.

The ancient mode of education was an integrated course of instruction, where the young man, as he began to grow, got the basic knowledge of Dharma, spiritual knowledge and secular behaviour. While he was acquiring this three-fold knowledge, he was also training himself in self-control and moderation, conquest of mind, restraint of senses, desires — Samyama, Sama, Dama, etc. The first 25 years of human life should be dedicated to acquire good health, perfect character, self-control and all that is necessary to know in order to live life righteously, to be financially independent via some trade or profession and at the same time be aware of the goal that one is ultimately going to attain.

Equipped with this knowledge, the Brahmachari — the student — entered into the second stage of life after he had already put a firm and ideal foundation. He was not in danger of becoming a slave of his senses; he was a self-restrained youth with character and self-control. Thus he entered into the Grihasthashrama (householder's life), took for himself a partner in life and was explained why he should enter into the Grihasthashrama: because the family lineage has to be kept continued for the sake of progeny. He took for himself a partner, for the sake of fulfilling Dharma, for the sake of practising Sadhana, devotion and worship. When he entered into the second stage of life, that is, the Grihasthashrama, he knew that he was not merely entering into a physical partnership with another physical creature, he was not entering into a social partnership with another family; he was entering into a spiritual partnership with a soul like him that had come into this world of embodied being, in order to fulfil its divine

destiny, each one working out one's own Karma Bhoga. So the relationship between a husband and a wife in the second Ashrama was not merely an earthly partnership, not merely physical, or even social, but essentially a spiritual partnership between two souls who were both on the upper path of spiritual evolution, ultimately culminating in divine perfection. This is how the view of life wherein 'Dampatya Sambandha is sacred' was brought home to us. The wife was called Sahadharmini. While living a life of Dharma, she was to be your companion. If you see the ancient concept of the wife, she was to man, everything—companion, friend, consoler, helper and partner in this great spiritual adventure of coming face to face with the great Reality. Such was the ideal and total concept of this relationship. Therefore, home became for them not only for the living of a normal worldly existence where the wife was the mother of his children, a hostess to receive his guests and a housewife looking after all these duties of the household, she also became a Sahadharmini and a partner in devotion and Upasana.

So the first duty of the householder was Isvara Upasana, Aradhana, and this they enabled by bringing about this wonderful tradition that prevails in our country of a Kula-Devata (worship of a family deity). For generations each family has a certain family deity and the home is a place of worship of this deity, and the worship of this deity was the first thing that the husband and wife did as soon as they got up in the morning.

The second important Dharma of the Grihasthashrama was Paropakara — to give charity, to help those in need — and Atithi Satkara (honouring of the guests). Atithi is not an invited guest, mind you. He is a chance visitor who happens to be at your door at the time

of your food. Atithya was one of the great Dharmas of the householder and his wife.

The third aspect of Grihastha Dharma was to evolve between themselves reciprocally a certain ideal behaviour of mutual love, honouring each other's individual freedom. This ideal relationship brought about in the house an atmosphere of harmony and cordiality. This third important duty also became a pattern of conduct for the children when they came into their family. The family, thus, became an ideal ground for nurturing a new generation. They find that between their parents exists a beautiful relationship of harmony, love, mutual respect and tolerance, which creates an ideal atmosphere for their growth. Through their personal relationship the parents place before the children an exemplary way of conducting themselves which becomes the first educational process of the children.

What moulds the character of the growing infant is the example placed by the mother and father to which they are exposed all the time. These examples become the atmosphere of the home, depending entirely upon the way in which the husband and wife behave with each other. This becomes the first educative process of the child. Home is, therefore, the nursery of the nation, nursery of the world. Providing an ideal setting and an ideal atmosphere for the generation of tomorrow becomes the third important duty of the married couple. Isvaropasana is the first duty, Paropakara and Samaja Seva is the second duty and providing an ideal environment for the coming generation through their own personal example is the third duty.

Now, we move on to the third Ashrama. Having fulfilled the duties of rearing children, making them adults capable of standing on their own feet, Grihasthashrama is not

to continue till the end of one's life. Up-till now you were entirely preoccupied with your family and your profession, providing for your parents, wife, children and other dependents. To a certain extent, it was a self-centred life, though within the scope of that self-centredness, the Grihastha, that is, the mother and father practised selflessness for the sake of the children. They sacrificed their personal comforts and conveniences for their children, their family and their parents. There was, within this apparently self-centred living, an exercise of unselfishness of a certain kind. When that phase is over one must give way to the new generation. There is a significant saying: When the son attains the age of 16, the father must treat him as a friend. The psychological advice given to the father is to gradually give the children responsibility, let them be self-reliant.

The husband and wife now move into a third dimension of social living where they retire. Having retired, they have little more leisure on their hands and at the same time the 25 to 30 years of professional living has given them vast experience and expertise in their line of work that now has to be placed at the disposal of the society. This third stage of life is the most valuable asset to the Indian society because during this period the Grihasthas become altruists and philanthropists. They are now the real selfless servants of the society. These middle-aged people still have good health, they have more time, they have experience and expertise which they must selflessly place at the disposal of the young generation as well as the society. They have earned, they have saved by careful living, so they are now servants of the society. This stage of life ought to be the most important stage. While keeping their knowledge and experience at the disposal of the society, they should, at the same time, give more emphasis to their inner life, go on a

pilgrimage, go to Ashrams, do Satsang, read the scriptures and become more contemplative. Both husband and wife should, together, enter more into the inner life, study, meditation, prayer, Satsang, pilgrimage and at the same time place themselves at the disposal of the society. We must realise that a time comes when we have to say 'good-bye'. We have to prepare for that last journey. We arrive at, to humorously put it, at the railway platform of our life when the train will come and we must cheerfully say good-bye.

At this time the sages conceived of the fourth Ashrama where the only duty is to gather together his mind and place it upon Brahman, on the Supreme Being. That is the fourth-quarter of life, the sun-set period of one's life when all your relationships and connections are now coming to a close, to an end. Till that time your entire Lakshya, your entire mind, should be fixed upon the Eternal, no more on the passing world. You have fulfilled all your duties and now you have to depart. The river is reaching the ocean and a time will come when it has to merge into the ocean.

Thus was conceived the four-fold Ashrama Dharma — Brahmacharya Ashrama (student life), Grihasthashrama (professional life), Vanaprasthashrama (selfless service and turning into the spiritual aspect) and ultimately the Sannyasashrama (total dedication to Brahman).

Now, you may say that times have changed, and that I am talking about some very old, ancient times. Yes, times have changed and we cannot duplicate these things as they were once upon a time. But my plea is that there is a great need to keep the spirit of this Ashrama Dharma alive. Keep the spirit intact, live this ideal but bring about a little adjustment and modification in the time period. So far as the Brahmacharya Ashrama is

concerned, by and large it has not changed. If you want to become a technically qualified person, an engineer or a doctor, by the time you finish your studies, you are 25 years old, anyhow. But in the other Ashramas you may bring about a necessary modification. But do not discard the Ashrama Dharma as something that has no relevance to our time. It has as much relevance and as much significance today as it was then because it is connected with human life. The spirit of these four Ashramas must be kept intact.

The third set of 'fours' which have been given to us to follow are the four spiritual qualifications that we must acquire in order to enter into a pursuit of that Supreme existence and realisation. It is called the Sadhana Chatushtaya — 1. Viveka (discrimination), 2. Vairagya (dispassion), 3. Shat-sampat (the six-fold virtues), viz., Sama (tranquillity), Dama (restraint), Uparati (satiety or renunciation), Titiksha (endurance), Sraddha (faith) and Samadhana (concentration), and 4. Mumukshutva (strong yearning for liberation).

What is it that makes us superior to animals? The ability to think and reason. We exercise intelligence for our own earthly living. We try to be clever and succeed in our normal life; but that is not enough. Intelligence has been given for higher things also. Therefore exercise Viveka — 'what is conducive to my highest welfare'. There is a great necessity to exercise Viveka. Dharma-adharma Viveka (discrimination between righteousness and unrighteousness), Nitya-anitya Viveka (discrimination between permanent and temporary), Sad-asad Viveka (discrimination between truth and untruth), Atma-anatma Viveka (discrimination between the Self and the non-Self) should be exercised.

The second qualification that you must develop is a disgust of, and a turning away from, all that is ignoble, gross and

unworthy by developing a great love for that which is worthy and noble. This is called dispassion or Vairagya. Raga means attachment and Asakti. To have attachment towards things that are unworthy and ignoble, gross and low, is not becoming of our human status. Centre your attachment upon God, centre it upon noble idealism, upon worthy pursuits. Have dispassion for all that is petty, unworthy and ignoble.

After Viveka and Vairagya, the third of this set of four is a peculiar combination, a set of six virtues. The six equipments are taken as one because they are calculated to bring about mental control and discipline. Concentration and meditation can never be possible without mental control and mental discipline. First virtue is equanimity of mind. If you are filled with too much of cravings and desires, every moment your mind is in a state of agitation and excitement as you live among attractive things of this illusory world. Knowing that your goal is elsewhere — I must live not only to fulfil these petty desires but also for the attainment of some higher ideal, higher goal — you reduce your desires, keep them under check; then the mind attains a certain state of equanimity. It does not become prey to excitement and agitation. Serenity is the topmost virtue in the group of Shat-sampat.

Then restraint of the senses (Dama). The mind will come under control very easily if Dama also is practised. By the practice of Dama you do not allow either the senses or the mind to come in contact with the objects. In the practice of Sama and Dama the five Jnana-Indriyas (organs of knowledge), viz., ears, skin, eyes, tongue (taste) and nose (smell) are controlled, besides the five Karma-Indriyas (organs of action), viz., speech, hands, feet, genitals and anus. The Indriyas should not be allowed to run riot into sensual grooves. They should not be allowed to throw us ruthlessly into the deep pit of worldliness just as the turbulent horse carries away the rider

wherever it likes.

Now we come to the practice of Uparati. Uparati is self-withdrawal. Uparati is extreme abstinence. The mind of the student who is established in Uparati will never be agitated even a bit when he comes in contact with external objects. This state of mind automatically comes when one has practised Viveka, Vairagya, Sama and Dama. When one perceives the worthlessness of all lower things and is convinced in the true worth of a higher thing then one turns away from the former and gets absorbed in the later. This state of mind is verily Uparati.

Titiksha is the power of endurance. A Titikshu is able to bear pain, insult, heat and cold. He does not lament on this score. He is free from anxiety. "He who has the power of endurance, who is balanced in pleasure and pain, steadfast, is fit for immortality" (Gita II-15). Adjust yourself to the temperaments and mentalities of others with whom you mix. This is the secret of happiness. Do not be afraid of insult, disrespect, dishonour, abuse or harsh words. This is real Titiksha.

Sraddha is unshakable faith in the existence of Brahman, in the teachings of the Guru and the scriptures. It also means faith in oneself. This is not blind faith. It is based on accurate reasoning, evidence and experience. Men with no assets but tremendous faith in themselves have accomplished wonders. Know that everything is lost when faith is lost. Faith is power. Faith is strength. Faith is abundant energy. Faith is the soul of religion. It creates new hopes and awakens immortality.

The last of the six-fold virtues is Samadhana. It is mental balance. It is equipoise and calm. There is perfect concentration now. This is the fruit of the practices of Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha and Sraddha. It is self-settledness.

Lastly we come to the fourth of the main qualifications, Mumukshutva or burning desire for liberation. If one is equipped with Viveka, Vairagya and Shat-sampat, Mumukshutva will come by itself. The mind moves towards the Source of its own accord, because it has lost its hold now on external objects.

This brief message is of interest to all of us because it holds the key to our happiness and it is based upon experience. In different individuals experiences can differ of the same thing, same situation, same perception, same event, but the ultimate experience of anyone and everyone of any time or any clime is uniform. It tallies. It does not differ either from person to person or place to place or time to time because the cosmic experience, the ultimate experience, is identical for all, the simple reason being that the Reality is one. It is indivisible, it is non-dual. Therefore the ultimate experience of all illumined seers, sages has always been one and this Truth about which I am going to tell you is based upon this ultimate experience which is Absolute. It does not depend upon any other factor and it is invariable. It is based upon the experience of not one but many, through millennium down centuries and generations so that it has been authenticated and proven again and again. It is another important point which you cannot afford to ignore, that this ultimate experience is an experience of pure, unalloyed, perfect and supreme happiness and peace.

Now I might have said it is pure unalloyed happiness, or I might have said it is pure and perfect peace, peace that passeth understanding. Why should I have said, instead, happiness and peace? I have said so because these two, i.e., peace and happiness, are inseparable. Peace is invariably accompanied by unutterable happiness and happiness is always absent where peace is absent. So where there is peace there is

happiness. The great musician — saint Tyagaraja says in Telugu: *Santamu leka saukhyamu ledu* — without peace there is no happiness. Those who want happiness must try to learn the technique of attaining peace. Simultaneously they will also have to find out what are the causes of its opposites, restlessness, agitation, excitement. These three contribute to the absence of peace. Those who want to have a perfect and radiant state of health and experience the joy of living, strength, perfect digestion, good sleep, good appetite, also have to learn the causes of ill-health so that they can avoid it. This is a dual process of avoiding that which is negative and cultivating that which is positive.

This is a vast subject in itself but we can condense it into a nutshell. If you want happiness, you must know how to generate peace from within and it is only when more and more individuals in society generate peace in their own heart, they are at peace with themselves, peace with people around them; such people alone will gradually spread the vibrations of peace, which may gradually widen in its area and bring about peace in wider fields and areas of human living. Ultimately, it can even lead to national and international peace. First and foremost the individual must be at peace with himself, otherwise the collection of restless individuals will bring about more restlessness.

If you go into a monastery where 40-50 monks dwell, all under vow of perpetual silence, each moving about serenely doing his own duty, performing prayer and his allotted work, what will your initial reaction be? The moment you go there you will become thrilled with a sense of peace. The monastery is a great contrast from the outside world, from the hectic world that you are coming from. Instantaneously you are at peace. Why? Because the whole atmosphere is saturated and

permeated with the vibrations of peace, because it is a place where a set of people are living in absolute peace. There is no discord, no disharmony, no clash or conflict. All are at peace with themselves, all are at peace among themselves and the moment you go there you too partake of that peace which has been generated, which is vibrating in that atmosphere. On the other hand if you go into a factory or a Stock Exchange where there is a lot of tension, there is a certain restlessness. There is no peace. In a University Campus there is no peace because of confrontations and oppositions and conflicts and clashes.

What is the way to establish peace within oneself? What is the way to try to move in the world with peace? Meditate upon peace. Daily we must meditate upon the concept of peace and a great desirability of peace, the countless advantages accruing from cultivating peace, living in peace, being at peace, how much good comes out of it, how much benefit results out of it, what a great deal of good accrues from peace. You must also meditate upon all the disadvantages of restlessness, excitement and agitation. You must contemplate on some ideal personality, the embodiment of peace, some serene being, who is a personification of absolute peace, like the great Buddha or Jesus of Nazareth, or any other great being who is full of peace, who had such abundance of peace that anyone who approached him immediately felt the great peace, like the great sage Ramana Maharshi of Ramanashram, Tiruvannamalai, Arunachala and our own Holy Master Swami Sivananda. He was peace within himself, peace with the whole world. He radiated peace. The moment you drew near to him, all your agitations vanished, all the turmoils simmering in your mind subsided and you felt peace, like a person coming in from the hot summer sun into an air-conditioned, cool, silent room of peace.

Meditate upon the peaceful figure and then meditate upon yourself as already having attained that state of absolute peace. Already visualise your self-image as being filled with peace, already having attained the state of absolute peace. So meditation on peace is one of the important keys to gradually developing peace within yourself, growing into a state of peace because what you constantly hold in your mind, that you gradually begin to experience. What you constantly think of, that you become. That is the great law of the inner realm, the realm of the mind, of thought, sentiment and emotion. This is one important key to peace.

Secondly, simplicity of life leads to peace. The more desires you develop the more restless is the mind. Desires are enemies of peace, specially miscellaneous unnecessary desires. Certain basic desires no one can avoid. They are necessary for the very living of our life, for surviving and existing. Try to keep your desires minimal. The more you multiply the desires and wants, the more you create restlessness in your mind and where there is restlessness there is no peace, there is no happiness. Desire is the enemy of peace. If the desire is countered, it leads to anger, anger leads to attachment and hatred.

Forgiving and forgetting is another way to peace. Ignore insult and injury, don't take it upon yourselves, don't start brooding over them. Never hold a grudge in your mind. Don't constantly think of returning tit for tat, paying back in the same coin. You will lose your peace of mind. Let go, let go. The more your egoism, the greater the restlessness of your mind. The simpler your heart, the greater your peace. The more you want recognition, status, power, authority, the more you are restless. If you want to attain peace, simplify your

life, reduce your wants and minimise your desires. Do not keep grudges, forgive and forget, do not seek recognition. You will have peace.

Thirdly, there is a great cosmic source of infinite immeasurable peace. To break away from it, to separate yourself from it, is to enter into a state of restlessness and agitation. If you inwardly try to connect yourself with it, with that great source, gradually peace will come into your own being. Link up with that supreme peace and blessedness which we call God. Call it God, call it anything. It is the ultimate Reality. It is perfect peace, it is absolute peace, it is unalloyed peace, boundless and limitless, infinite and unfathomable, immeasurable, eternal peace. Link yourself with that and then gradually peace will come unto you and simultaneously you will attain bliss.

Forget the past. Don't brood over it. Don't plan too much for the future. Try to move through the present serenely, unaffectedly. Then you will experience the peace that is ever present; not for one split second it is absent. Peace is always there. We superimpose upon it our own restlessness. There is no lack of peace in this universe. Peace floods this universe in abundance, everywhere, at all times. It is we who superimpose our restlessness upon that ever present perfect peace. If you can, harmonise with that peace. Be one with it. If possible generate peace and add to it.

While we are trying to be at peace with ourselves and invoke peace from within by the methods that have been suggested, we may counter a different problem. We may be at peace with ourselves, but when we move among other people we come into contact with people who are not at peace and their restlessness sometimes is infectious. This infection is

transferred to us. In the presence of any angry man you also become excited. In the presence of a serene man your anger subsides. So it is infectious. When we constantly move amidst people who are always in a state of agitation, restlessness, fighting, quarreling, excited and irritable, it becomes very difficult to keep our peace. So how can you deal with this? I will tell you one or two wise little hints which Masters of Wisdom have given us. No matter how dark the night around you, if you have a little lamp, you can find your way. You can reach your destination. So be a light unto yourself. Carry your own peace. Abide in it. The darkness around you cannot bother you. If you are firmly established, you will be able to pass through this universe, full of restlessness, yet, manage to maintain your peace.

Every day on your way to work you have to pass through a very unsavoury locality which is always stinking with rotten garbage. It is revolting, but what can you do? You cannot purchase tons of eau-de-cologne and other scents and try to sprinkle it over all the garbage. But you can have some nice scent on the tip of your handkerchief and the lapel of your dress and keep it near your nose when you pass through that area and thus you would have conquered the situation. You have to walk across a jungle, full of sharp flinty stones and thorny bushes. What do you do? You make for yourself a pair of very serviceable strong leather shoes and you can cover miles and miles of forest, no matter how flinty the rocks and how sharp the thorns. So far as you are concerned they are as good as not being there. So, we cannot change the world, we cannot alter the nature of all people. May be, within your own home, your place of work and in the bus in which you commute, there are all sorts of people. You cannot carry a magic wand and try to change them. There is a limit to your ability to change people and things around you.

But you are a master of yourself. You can bring about a

change in yourself. A great, wise master once said: "Towards those who are lesser than you, inferior to you, in any way, may be in age, education, culture, in wealth, status, authority, talent, or may be in natural endowment, have an attitude of kindness. Do not be annoyed and upset with them. Be kind and compassionate towards those who are lesser than you. Feel a sense of friendliness towards your equals and rejoice in their success and good fortune. Replace jealousy, envy and a sense of competition with genuine friendliness of the heart. One always tends to become agitated, jittery and nervous in the presence of superiors — those who are superior in any way, in status, strength, power, wealth, or learning — and loses one's peace of mind. Towards such people, consciously cultivate an attitude of serenity. Always be serene and unruffled. You will go through this agitated world, enjoying your peace, and when you are at peace, you will have happiness also.

This is with regard to the outer world of people. What about this outer world of things, happenings and events? Sometimes we have certain desires that are fulfilled and sometimes they are not fulfilled. If fulfilment gives you elation and disappointment gives you depression, it is no good. You will always be at the mercy of these events. So be contented under all circumstances. Be cheerful, no matter what happens. Rejoice if something turns up just as you want it, feel happy if something turns up to the contrary, feel happy even if something turns up in a third way; rejoice in the Lord's Will and feel happy. It is His world. It is His dispensation. If it is shining, are you not glad? If it is raining, are you not glad? This philosophy of life where you accept everything as ultimately for the good will bring you peace.

Always rejoice in everything and at all times, because

there is a valid reason why a thing is what it is and why it is not what it is not. Nothing happens without a reason. The All-Wise being is working out a plan according to His own dispensation. You may not be able to see the reason immediately but you will realise it later on. Everything turns out for the good. Therefore, you should take all events with this attitude of acceptance and rejoicing, knowing that the wisdom of God is behind it. There must be some reason, therefore accept everything; you stand to gain in every way if you keep contented and cheerful and by the same law you stand to lose if you allow yourself to become elated and depressed by everything. Therefore, in your own interest, come what may, rejoice, be serene, be happy and do not allow anything to touch and spoil your inner happiness.

Develop this philosophy of life, this outlook, and your peace will be maintained, and where there is peace there is happiness. Rejoice in the happiness of others. Trust in God and be serene. Above all things, do not allow anything to affect your inner peace. Then only are you wise. Then only do you have the key to happiness, and who does not want happiness? The key to happiness is peace, and that key to peace I have tried to put before you, in some way. By no means have I covered the whole subject, but even these little things if you put into practice, I promise that you will begin to have greater peace progressively in spite of the restlessness around you and through peace you will also find happiness. Peace and happiness go together. You cannot separate them. Wisdom lies in evolving peace within ourselves and finding it in our dealings with the world. Happiness will follow as a matter of course.

DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA, MOKSHA: BRAHMACHARYA, GARHASTHYA, VANAPRASTHA, SANYASA

(SWAMI KRISHNANANDA SARASWATI)

The attainment of spiritual perfection is like a gradual ascent in the form of a pyramid. It has a base and it rises gradually, step by step, until the apex at the top is reached. This pyramidal structure of human life is constituted of four aspects of life, the fourfold requirements for the very existence of a person.

The material needs of the body are a very important concern indeed. Whatever be your spiritual aspiration, you cannot ignore that you have a body. As long as you feel that you have a body and cannot ignore its presence or forget that it is there, then you cannot also forget its requirements. Everyone, even an advanced spiritual seeker, has certain needs concerning the physical body, like protection against heat and cold, hunger and thirst, sun and rain, etc. If you ignore these essentials, the body may perish, even though you may have an innocent spiritual aspiration. There is what is known as a total of material requirement, material need. Its importance is well known, and is known as *artha*, the material unavoidable.

Then, there is another thing: the aesthetic longings of the human personality. One cannot be happy merely by eating, drinking, putting on clothes, and having a house in which to stay. Even such a person will not be a complete person; there are other requirements which are of a vital nature, — the desire-filled nature of the individual. A desire is not merely the desire for food and clothing, though it is primary in some way. There are other insistent desires called *kama*, or vital wishes to be fulfilled, which are other pressures exerted by the biological

personality, which, too, cannot be ignored, as they are part of oneself. Those who have lived a totally isolated life, unconnected with human society for a long period, will know the working of this kind of feeling in oneself. A disturbance of an unknown kind will take place inside the mind of the person, causing agitation of heart. Due to that difficulty in controlling this reason behind the agitation of such emotional feelings, a Yoga student also may be subject to intense anger, continuous irritation, intolerance of anything, and a bursting forth of one's own personality in an anguished manner. This is the negative aspect of the unfulfilled emotional desires. They cannot all be fulfilled, and they also cannot be totally ignored.

The nature of this kind of urge or impulse is something that cannot be imagined by an ordinary mind; just as one cannot know oneself fully, one cannot also know all the desires of one's own person. Here it is that you are in danger and you require the guidance of a master, a superior person. Whenever you are agitated, disturbed and cannot control yourself, almost feeling that you are going out of your track in your mental operations, at that time you have to approach a guide and place before that guide everything that you are passing through inwardly.

Then, together with all these, there is also the aspiration for *moksha*, attainment of God, which is a fulfilment, finally, of the whole complex of desires, physical as well as vital. That also is to be taken care of with great caution, as the one conditioning everything else. The method by which you can hook together these three types of impulse and the final aspiration harmoniously, — that procedure of the cementing of all these sides of human nature is called *dharma*, or the law of harmonisation of the aspects of the whole of life, with all its relations in human society.

Dharma is sometimes translated as religion: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and others. *Dharma* is not denominational religion, necessarily. It is rather a law operating

in the universe, by which everything is kept in a state of cohesion so that there is no dismemberment of the life of anyone or anything. You could be thrown into shreds of mental individuality, as if the mind has been broken and cast into the winds in different directions, with a feeling that you have lost yourself entirely, if *dharma* does not operate in you. Please forget the old definition of *dharma* as some religion. It is not any kind of "ism." It is an ultimate law that keeps the universe in balance, keeps the body, the mind, your reasoning, society and everything in a state of perfect integration so that you feel that you are existing as a total individual and do not feel that you are a mix-up of several parts heaped together in a confused manner.

This definition of *dharma* is hard for an ordinary person to comprehend because we are always, right from the beginning, initiated into a wrong notion of *dharma* as going to a temple, worshipping a god, following a faith. I follow Christian *dharma*, Hindu *dharma*, Muslim *dharma*, is a common saying. This is a poor definition of *dharma*, which is something more than what one can easily think. It is the law prevailing eternally in the universe everywhere, in every aspect of creation, in every degree of manifestation, including your own individual existence.

All these four facets of life have to be brought together into a focus of attention at the same time. These are known as the *purusharthas*, or aims of existence, the final objectives of life known popularly as *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, i.e., moral value, economic value, vital value and eternal value. None of these aspects can be ignored in our life. Mostly people emphasise *moksha* and ignore the other things and fall sick, and even become mentally a little aberrant. And, in the same way, you can emphasise wrongly one thing and forget the three other aspects by which you may turn into a shred rather than a total individual. All this is the foundation that you have to lay for your aspiration towards spiritual perfection, so that right from the

beginning it is a rise from a wholeness of approach through gradations of wholeness of perception, until you reach the ultimate wholeness which is the Infinite.

One of the questions raised, perhaps, is the nature of the Infinite. If the Infinite is based on the Infinite only, where is the question of *karma*? *Karma* has no connection with the Infinite. It has a connection with the finite only. That which is located only in one place is called the finite. That which is everywhere is called the Infinite. Inasmuch as the Infinite is everywhere, it cannot perform any kind of individualised action; so *karma* cannot be attributed to the Infinite. *Karma* is a result of the reaction produced by individualised actions. The Infinite has no *karma*; therefore, our aspiration for the Infinite frees us from the bondage of action, also.

Pumamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate, purnasya purnamadaya purnameva avasishyate: There was the whole in the beginning. From the whole, the whole universe manifested itself. Therefore, this universe in which we are living is not a conglomeration of little pieces of material objects or individual existences. Even now, it is a whole. The world works in a systematised, complete manner. From the whole which is the Infinite, the whole universe has come out in a whole manner, as a child is born as a whole entity, from its source which is also a whole. A little pin-pointed drop, as it were, which is the origin of the child, is not one drop among many other drops; it is a whole by itself, containing the wholeness of the child, as the little seed contains the wholeness of a large tree.

Thus, everything is "whole." You are whole, and you are living a whole life, and you detest any kind of partition in your way of living. You like everything in a completed form. That is the internal meaning of this great *Upanishadic mantra*: That is full, and this universe also is full; from the whole, the whole comes as this creation. How can it be possible? There cannot be two

wholes, or two hundred-percents. There can be only one hundred-percent, not two. So, how can a hundred-percent origin produce another hundred-percent of this universe? This is a mystery, which should suggest that no activity has taken place in the process of creation. It is not that one day the Infinite thought, "Let me become something else," though such is the story we often read in scriptural narrations.

It is something like your whole mind becoming manifest as a whole dream. The dream is a whole thing; your whole being is transformed into a world of dream experience, and this whole experience of the dream world has emanated from the whole which was your waking mind. Then, does it mean that the whole waking mind has transformed itself into a whole that is the dream experience? If a transformation has taken place, then the original would cease to be in the process of transformation, just as when the whole milk becomes whole curd, the whole milk ceases to exist any more. If such a thing has taken place in the process of creation, — the whole Infinite Absolute has become the whole universe, like the modification taking place in milk when it becomes yoghurt or curd, — then, inasmuch as the milk ceases to be, God also would cease to be after creation. There would be no Infinite for you to attain afterwards. There would be only this curd of the universe. But that is not true. You have not really become the world of dream because if you had really transformed yourself into it, you would not wake up into the original consciousness of the total waking mind.

This whole coming from the whole is a kind of appearance, like the whole face seen in a mirror as a whole reflection. You are a whole person, and you can see yourself in a mirror as a whole person. There are two whole persons, — one that is there seeing the reflection in the mirror; another is the whole person reflected in the mirror. Are they, then, two whole persons? Can you say that one whole person has become another

whole person here? For all perceptive practical purposes, the whole has become another whole through the mirror of reflection; but really, only the one existed. The *purna* (full) only is there when it has become another *purna* (full). Nothing has happened, really, in the same way as when you are reflected as a whole person in a mirror, nothing has happened to you in fact. You are the same person, always.

Thus, having taken the whole from the whole, the whole remains. Nothing has taken place, which would mean that there is no such thing as creation as described in mythological fashions, in a dramatic way, as is presented before us by stories of creation in the cosmological narrations. Such being the case, our life also should be moulded according to this vision of wholeness. As wholeness has not ceased to be, we have never become individual beings at any time. We never got distracted into personalities that we are appearing to be here. We are the same wholes and, therefore, all fulfilment is here at the same time. It is not connected with a past, present, or future.

This is the vision that you have to develop before yourself, so that even when you take the first step in spiritual practice, you feel that you are a totally contented person, having achieved everything, right from the beginning itself, because a series of wholes or perfections rise from the lower to the higher degrees. In *sadhana*, the rise from the lower to the higher level is not a fraction developing itself into a whole. A fraction can never become a whole; the part always remains a part, and the whole always remains separate from the part. But here, a mini-whole manifests itself into a larger whole.

Your ascent in spiritual *sadhana* is your whole personality rising into gradual expanded forms of wholeness of your own personality, so that when you reach the ultimate pinnacle of this wholeness, you realise yourself as a world figure, like the *Viratsvarupa* Itself. What is *Virat*? It is you, yourself, expanded

to the ultimate pinnacle of the absolute universal.

This is how you have to bring into a state of harmony all your requirements through the otherwise dissected forms of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and the ideal of *moksha*. We generally think that *moksha* comes afterwards, and *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* are before that. That is to say, today is *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*; tomorrow is *moksha*. But *moksha* is not a tomorrow; it is just here, present immanently in *dharma*, *artha* and *kama* also. It is like the gradual regaining of health by degrees through the very same consciousness that is immanently present in your body. It is not that a part of your body is regaining health. A wholeness of health which was in a miniature form rises into a larger wholeness which is perfect health, perfect satisfaction.

This is how we have to consider the ways of bringing together the aspirations which are *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* in our practical life. Spiritual life is a wonderful, most satisfying, magnificent thing even to think of, so that wherever you are, in whatever condition, whatever you may be doing in your life, you feel that you are fearless, fulfilled always, and everything that you need is at your hand. Thus, these four aspects of your life should come together as a vital blending in the way of living.

In a way this is, to put it differently, the bringing together of the aspirations of a *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin* into a single fold. You will be wondering how all the four can be together. It is because these four stages of life are four kinds of preparation for a single attainment of totality of the person. The *sanyasin* is not isolated from the *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, or the *vanaprastha*. The *brahmacharin* is the seed that develops into the practical experience of a *grihastha* in life, which again matures into the detached existence of a *vanaprastha*, which again matures into the total comprehension of the spirit in *sanyasa*.

So, *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* have some kind of connection with *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*. *Dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* are not like the four legs of a cow, unconnected; they are all one, like the four quarters of a coin, which cannot be separated because the coin contains all the quarters inside it. In a similar manner, all these four, — *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*, — are inside imperceptibly in the coin of your whole life. That also is the meaning of the apparently differentiated lives of the *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*. They are also four aspects of the one coin of total development. Thus, always, you live a total life, whether you are living in one stage of life or another.

I have to repeat a few guidelines that I placed before you previously, which are of practical utility to you. You have to keep good company always. Even if you are a householder looking like a bound person, you can be a good person, an ideal individual, by living in the midst of a good community in a village, or even a little township of friends and cooperative individuals. Keep good company, as far as it is possible. If you can live socially, it is wonderful for you to choose your company, and be in the midst of those people only.

But, under circumstances which are beyond your control, if you are compelled to live in the midst of people who are not compatible with your personal aspirations, you have to do one of two things. Exert your power over the atmosphere of dissident individuals and bring a kind of transformation among them also and turn them round into a, good way of living. If that is not possible, ignore their existence as if they do not exist at all, and you are concerned with them only as a practical means of doing day-to-day work in an office, etc. These are some of the ways of adjustment that you have to practise.

And, how you spend your whole day is also something very important. This is the very meaning of the spiritual diary inaugurated by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. What do you do actually, right from the morning until you go to bed in the evening? Make a detailed analytical study of everything that you do on any day. If you are working hard for some reason, find out for how many hours of the day you are working hard. Deduct this number of hours from the total number of hours in a day. How much time do you need for sleep and rest? How much time for bathing, recreation, and for breakfast, lunch and dinner? How much for any other necessities? The balance is the hours that are available to you to attempt living a total life, even in the midst of your activities.

You may say that there is no balance left, — the whole thing is a distraction. It cannot be like that, because nobody works all the twenty-four hours of the day, and nobody sleeps also indefinitely. Carefully if you analyse your life, you will find that some little balance is left, even if it be only one hour. That one hour is yours. Consider all the other hours as not yours; they belong to somebody else. This one hour is sufficient for you.

Your longing for spiritual attainment is what is going to lead to success and not necessarily the number of hours available, — though the number of hours also count when your concentration of mind is not sufficiently strong. If there is a burning aspiration, *tivra-samvega*, with ardour in the heart, then God knows your heart much better than anybody else. All your sufferings, all your difficulties, all your problems are known to the Mighty Being. "Trust in God and do the right." This is the old dictum before you: thus, lead your life.

Gradually, bear in mind that your householder-life is a preparation for a retirement from the occupations of a householder. It is not a retirement from work, necessarily. The

occupation is inclusive of certain mental entanglements. A householder, actually, is not a person doing many things, but thinking in many ways. The entanglement is not necessarily physical, but mostly psychological. The psychological detachment should mature gradually in a family. You do your duty to take care of your family, but don't be attached to the family.

You may be wondering how it is possible to take care of the family with detachment. This is the difference between duty and work with desire. A duty is a necessity, an obligation, that arises from your very being in the circumstance of your life; it has to be done for the welfare of the whole circumstance of your life, including the society outside. Your obligation is not to be associated with a desireful action. Here it is that the *Bhagavad Gita* comes before you as a guideline. The gradual detachment, even in a householder, is a maturity of thought arising after the experience of the whole of life as an entangled individual in society. In the beginning it is all entanglement. Then, later on, it is only an apparent entanglement through social relations; mentally it is not so connected.

Slowly begin to feel that your mind is a little different from the body and social relations. Then afterwards you will find that you can live a life in the mind only, and let the social relations be anywhere. You are a mind, rather than a social unit. You are a mind thinking, rather than a physical individual associated with the mind. Thought is the human being, so let this thought be your final concern, and live in your ideas.

Ideas rule the world. Every action is preceded by a thought. The world is not governed by the actions of people, but by the thoughts of people, by the ideas of the leaders of mankind. The ideas manifest themselves as activities or performances. The idea is the ultimate reality; thought is the final principle in the cosmos. Thus, you live in your mind, in your idea of total comprehension and satisfaction. Then, gradually, you will find

that you are capable of living independently without bodily associations. Such a life is called the *vanaprastha* stage, which does not mean running away from the family. It is a kind of family, life only, without the agonies and the emotional pressures caused by relations with people.

Mostly, what people do is that they go away to some holy places for some time, though they have not left the family. For three months in a year, the family man goes out on a pilgrimage, lives in a holy place, and entrusts the enterprise of taking care of the family to his grown-up children. Whether you are a businessman, or whatever you are, this is the first step that you have to take to detach yourself. For three months you are not in the house. After that, you come back to the house and stay there for nine months, so that you may feel no uneasiness that you are without any 'contact with your family members. Gradually, if this process continues for some years, you will find that you are in a position to live unconnected with family life, because the members of the family are taken care of by the children, who are well placed. Then, you may increase your detached life into six months, nine months, then occasional visits to the family, only. Somewhere in a sacred place you live such a life; then your life and your idea that you have chosen takes possession of you completely. You become an ideal being, not a physical individual. Your meditation is thought thinking itself, as they say, idea operating on idea, the Cosmic Mind dancing in the centre of your own idea, whereby your idea becomes a focusing point of the Cosmic Mind, and you are a *sanyasin* at that time.

A *sanyasin* is not necessarily someone who has put on any particular cloth. The cloth is just an indication that he has achieved that state. It is a social insignia to distinguish the person from other people. The essential thing is what you think in your mind, so live in your mind only, afterwards. Your ideas are the seeds of the universal idea of God. A person who lives such a

kind of life in his ideas only is a *sanyasin*. He has renounced truly.

What has he renounced? He has renounced the feeling that the world is anything but an idea finally, a mental operation, a cosmic dance of the Universal Spirit, in which condition, the question of attachment to anything does not arise at all. Hence the question of the so-called renunciation also does not arise. Automatically you are a healthy spiritual person, just as when you have become healthy, you have not renounced illness. Illness has not been thrown away. In a similar manner, you have not thrown away anything in your renunciation through *sanyasa*. You have attained a perfect, total, developed maturity of spiritual comprehension. That kind of living of an ideal existence, free in every sense of the term, happy always, happy with anything and everything, — such a person is a *sanyasin*.

These are some of the traditional features of a spiritual life, — the methods of the harmonising of the principles of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* connected with the principles involved in the stages of the *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sanyasin*, all which commingle in a sea of comprehension which is the maintenance of God-consciousness. Such a person alone can be called a *sanyasin*.

These are, practically, all the things you need for understanding the nature of spiritual life. Right from the beginning till now, whatever you have heard in these sessions is a book of life for you. It is a gospel, a treasure house which you can keep with you as a godsend, which will save you in every way for ever and ever.

PRINCIPLES FOR A RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN ASPIRATION

(SWAMI KRISHNANANDA SARASWATI)

The suggestion, then is that the aim of evolution is ultimately spiritual and the sense of the spiritual has to be comprehended in its proper significance. It is to be realised that there has to be a unifying blend of the fourfold Aim of Existence, viz., *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*, — a coming together of the moral, the economic, the vital and Infinite values in a concentrated focus of thought, speech and action. It is not infrequently that spirituality is regarded as 'a phase' of life, an aspect of human pursuits, and even an other-worldly aim, to be thought of at the fag-end of one's life. Nothing can be a greater travesty of truth than this sort of erroneous thinking and evaluation. How can the Infinite value be relegated to an aspect, a phase of life, or an other-worldly concern? Does not the Infinite include all things, — the other-worldly as well as the this-worldly, the transcendent as well as the temporal? Else, how could it be the Infinite? How, then, if spirituality is the process of the pursuit of the Infinite, can it be a segmented aspect of life? Would it not then embrace the whole of life within itself, and would not life itself be impossible without it? Yes; the spiritual value is not 'a value' but 'the value' of all life', without which life would lose its very meaning and be turned into an essenceless phantom.

It also follows from the concept of the Infinite that, if the Infinite value has to include the moral, the economic, and the vital values within itself, so that *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama* get subsumed under *Moksha*; then the pursuit of morality, wealth and personal satisfaction in life has perforce to get included in the pursuit of *Moksha* or liberation from the thralldom of life,

i.e., the spiritual includes the temporal. The complaint of our communist friends and social welfare workers against religion and spirituality, if there is any, is thus without any basis; for, it is founded on a misconception of the spiritual as well as the religious, which, latter, in fact, is but the outward expression of the spiritual. As it was pointed out, the human mind is not constituted in such a way as to enable it to comprehend this tremendous truth behind the drama of life, so that the human mind always complains against existing conditions and, distrusts even the logically deducible consequences that could be reasonably inferred from the observation of the phenomenon called life. The great tragedy of human life has been the unwarranted isolation of the spiritual from the temporal and the consequent clinging to an over-emphasis of the material needs of this world, or to a supposed religious ideal confined to the otherworld. It is due to a thorough-going misrepresentation of truth that we have among us materialists, atheists and hedonists on one side and a theoretically-idealistic religionists, priests and pontiffs on the other side, one contending with and opposed to the other and creating a scene of conflict in the world. There should be no wonder if either side gets frustrated in its pursuit because the demand of both the sides seems similar to the point involved in the humorous effort to keep half-a-hen for cooking and half for laying eggs.

Would people realise at least today that existence in the world cannot be bifurcated from the existence of the Central Aim of Life? Gathering the outcome of our thoughts expressed earlier, we may proceed further to the art and the enterprise of blending *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* into a single body of human aspiration. As was indicated, this is a difficult job, for the mind is not accustomed to think in such an integral fashion. But it has to be done, and one cannot escape it, if life is to have any meaning and not be a mere desultory drifting from one objective to another, every moment of time.

Artha, or the material object of one's pursuit, may be considered first, since it is this that seems to be the primary centre of life's attraction in to the immediately visible and tangible field of experience. The object is naturally the physical something that presents itself before a sense-organ, — seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling or touching. It is impossible to have a proper notion of an object unless we have a correct apprehension of the structure of the senses themselves. Normally, it is supposed that the objects of the senses are variegatedly spread out in space and each sense grasps a particular object. It is also believed that the object is 'outside' the particular sense which apprehends it. Thus, two conceptions are involved in sense-perception, namely, that the objects are differently distributed outside in space and that they are external to the senses perceiving them. Without this twofold notion sense-contact and sense-satisfaction will lose their proper significance. It is on this stated assumption that the senses seem to be asking for their own respective comforts and pleasures. But their needs and askings of this kind automatically get grouped under what may be called the 'vulgar view of life', if it can be shown that the objects are neither variegated nor are they really external to the senses. Any satisfaction rooted in a misconception about it can not continue for long, nor can it be considered a real necessity of life. A final investigation into the structure of things would not be within the range of the 'vulgar thinking' which goes hand in hand with the untutored assumption of the senses, but the purified reason coupled with a more acute observation will reveal that the truth of things is far removed from the sensory notions of the uneducated mind. We may say that our knowledge of things cannot be regarded as ultimately valid unless it becomes scientific in the correct sense of the term. It should be noted that an object is a concentrated group of characters brought together by factors with a universal implication. An object is only an outer form of the inner concrescence of forces which tie themselves

into knots, as it were, into what we call as object in space and time, and it is only the outer form that the senses can perceive, not the inner implication of this subtler activity that is going on within the structure of things beyond the ken of the senses. Physicists prefer to call objects as fields of force, rather than things or substances, by which what is meant is that an object is co-extensive with other objects, as a ripple in the ocean is substantially co-extensive with the entire body of the ocean. This fact is brought out in a more prominent manner in & famous verse of the Bhagavad-Gita where, in connection with a description of the way in which senses come in contact with objects, it declares that 'properties move among 'properties' (*Gunah Guneshu Vartante*). What this Yoga text means hereby is that the 'properties' or 'Gunas' of the Mother of all material formations known as *prakriti*, are equally present in the senses and their objects; or, in other words, the very same *prakriti* constituted of the forces of equilibrium, kinetics and dynamics (*Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*) is present in the senses as well as the objects. What the substance is of the structure of the senses is also the substance of the structure of the objects, so that it cannot be said that the objects are external to the senses, just as there is no point in saying that the ocean is external to the waves upon it, though we may imagine that the waves have every right of imagining that the ocean is outside them. But how far this is from truth needs no iteration.

Moreover, it is not difficult to notice that everything in this world is made up of the five elements, — Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether, — in a variety of permutations and combinations, wherein are included the objects of senses as well as our own bodies which are the receptacles of the senses. Even crudely speaking, what separates one object from another is space, and space, unfortunately, enters into the constitution of every object including our bodies. Where then comes externality

of objects, the outsideness of things? If things are not outside, how can one pursue or long for them? *Kama*, which is desire for objects loses its ground when the structure of the objects is known to be inextricably woven into the pattern of one's body and senses. That all this is not a part of the curriculum of our education in our institutions will only be an additional credit to the glory of our educational system, which leaves a student at sea the moment he comes out of his *alma mater*, in flying colours. Life begins to stare hard on one's face when the educational course is completed. Truly, education seems to begin only then! The significance of *Artha* and *Kama*, the objects and the desire for them needs no large commentary to explain them in the light of the foregoing analysis. *Artha* and *Kama*, then seem to harass us only until we do not know *Dharma*, or the Law of Truth.

Dharma, which is the name for the righteousness that is rooted in the makeup of all things in the universe, is the ruling factor that determines the significance and validity of both the existence of objects and one's longing for them. This is why, perhaps, *Bhagavan* Sri Krishna mentions in the Gita that He, as the All-Pervading Presence, is *Kama* or desire which is not opposed to *Dharma* or righteousness. But that desire cannot be regarded as being in consonance with righteousness or the rule of Nature, which regards objects as sheerly 'external' to the senses, a proposition which has been ruled out in the Bhagavad-Gita itself while it announced that 'properties' move among 'properties'. The *Bhagavad-Gita* also mentions, in its 18th Chapter, that the notion which regards a particular thing as if it is everything is to be considered as the worst type of understanding, or knowledge. Every form of desire is usually of this character in the sense that desire clings to a particular object taking it for the whole value of life or sometimes a group of objects regarding them as the entire aim of existence. Such a desire which is associated with the lowest type of understanding is what usually

goes by the name of *Kama* or longing for *Artha* or object. This is definitely not in agreement with the principle of *Dharma* which is rightly defined as that which holds all things together as a sort of universal gravitational centre (*Dharanat dharma iti ahuh*).

It is hard to give a dictionary-definition of *Dharma* or find an apt synonym for it in the English language; for, *Dharma* is that all-pervasive cohesive principle which keeps all things in a harmonious state of integration. Now, this harmony and integration is discoverable in every level of life. Physically, it is the energy which holds one's body in unison and does not allow it to disintegrate; vitally, it is the force which keeps the *Prana* moving in harmony with the body; mentally, it is the power which maintains the sanity of thought and keeps the psychological apparatus working in an orderly fashion and not allow it to run riot in a haphazard manner; morally, it is the urge which recognises as much value in others as in one's own self and regards in them the proper status which they are occupying in their own places; intellectually, it is the logical principle of coherence of judgment and correspondence of idea with fact. In the external universe, it acts as the force of gravitation, physically; as mutual reaction, chemically; as the principle of growth and sustenance, biologically; as co-operative enterprise, socially. Finally, it is the principle of the unity of the Self, spiritually.

If the Divine Being can be found present in a desire that is in consonance with *Dharma*, as the Bhagavad-Gita puts it in its 7th Chapter, then, naturally, no ordinary desire for objects of sense can be regarded as divine, for, it obtains the sanction of Divinity only when it is in agreement with the principle of *Dharma* which, as we have seen, is so vast and comprehensive that, when it becomes the divinely acceptable feature in the human being, it ceases to be an over-mastering passion as in the case of mortal desires but becomes a suggestion for the recognition of the Infinite in all finite values of life.

This majestic vision of life is manifest in human society as the order of *Varna* and *Asrama*, two terms as difficult to understand as the word *Dharma*. Usually, *Varna* and *Asrama* are translated as the 'caste system' and the tradition of the 'four orders' of life. This forthright and offhand definition has led to many misconceptions about the significance of these phases of the methodology of life, so that *Varna*, according to this interpretation, becomes a disrupting factor in life, most undesirable and pernicious, and *Asrama* a meaningless grandmother's superstition of an antediluvian type. But, not so is the truth of the matter.

Varna does not mean 'colour' referring to the *Aryan* or the *Dravidian* difference of skin, nor indicating anything like the superior and the inferior in the social organisation of human beings. To think so would be a total misconstruing of fact. *Varna* is not a 'colour' visible to the eyes but a 'degree' conceivable by the mind; which means to say that by the term *Varna* we are to understand the degrees of expression of *Dharma* in human society in such a way that their coming together or co-ordination will sustain human society and existence. Though life is a continuous and single whole enshrining in its bosom knowledge, power, richness and energy, all together, it cannot be manifest in any particular human individual in such a comprehensive fashion unless he is a Superman (*Ati-manava*). In ordinary human beings, such a blending of the four factors is impossible. There is always a preponderance of either understanding, will, emotion or action, practically corresponding to these four factors contributory to the essential necessities of life, which cannot ignore any of these four aspects. Inasmuch as these factors of life's growth and sustenance are diversely found preponderating in different individuals, it has been found necessary to cause a co-ordination of the different groups of individuals in whom there is a pre-eminence of these factors, separately. Just as the head cannot

do the work of the legs, the eyes cannot hear and the ears cannot see, and so on, so that the perfection of the organism is maintained by a co-ordination of these limbs and organs of the body, human society is held together as a single growing and prospering organism by a co-ordination of those individuals in whom there is a predominant manifestation of the mentioned factors, severally. The question of 'superior' and 'inferior' among the individuals does not arise here, since the purpose is to help the growth of each and everyone towards a complete view of life and an achievement of the total value of life by each person, enabling each one, in this way, to participate in all the four values, the blending together of which alone can be regarded as complete fulfilment. The absence of anyone of these factors or values would point to a serious defect in the organism of human society and the individual. And happiness is nowhere to be found where perfection is absent. The psychic and spiritual personality of an individual seeks growth and expansion in the process of evolution, and this growing and intensifying process of life assumes a marked emphasis at a certain stage, in which condition the individual's attitude to life puts on a distinct form of thought and conduct. These stages are what are known as the *Asramas*, and they are mainly four : the stage of the exuberance and energy of adolescence, which needs training and discipline and seeks learning and knowledge; the stage of outer activity and social relationship, wherein one fulfils the normal human desires and performs the expected duties as a unit of the wider society of people; the stage of greater maturity of thought in which one detects the evanescence of temporal values and material possessions, and aspires to delve into the truth behind phenomena; the stage of illumination in which one lives a life of atonement with the ultimate Reality : The 'stages' are the 'orders of life' necessitated by the progressive emphasis which it receives in onward evolution.

Yoga has been defined as union with Reality, in its different degrees of manifestation, both within and without. Thus, by the fulfilment of one's functions in life through the laws and disciplines of *Varna* and *Asrama*, one moves gradually from the outer to the inner, — from the external forms to the deeper meaning of things, — and rises upward, from the gross to the subtle, and from the subtle to the ultimate essence of existence. The concepts of the four *Purusharthas*, — *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*; of the four *Varnas*, — the classes of society wielding spiritual, political, economic and manual power; of the four *Asramas*, — the stages of study and discipline ; performance of duty, individually as well as socially; withdrawal from attachment to perishable things; and communion with the Supreme Reality, — These sum up the total structure of life in its integrality, excluding nothing, and including everything in its most comprehensive gamut.

It was pointed out that this all-encompassing picture of life is difficult to visualise, at one stroke, and so the ancient adepts have instituted a three-fold approach to this truth of life, viz., the envisagement of life through the concepts of the objective (*Adhibhuta*), the subjective (*Adhyatma*) and the super-normal Deity aspect of Reality (*Adhidaiva*) transcending both the objective and the subjective aspects of experience. Here, again, the proper way would be to move from the outward to the inward and then go to the upward; which means that we have to take into consideration, first of all, the physical and social reality outside, then study and discipline our individual life and personality; and finally go upward to the higher superintending controlling power which would point to an ascent to one's final Goal. In our capacity as contents of the physical world and parts of human society we would do well, initially, to conduct our selves in such a way that we do not violate the laws of Nature outside and the rules of the community and society in which we live. The laws of

health and hygiene and of ethics and morality in society are, thus, preliminary requisites in this grand evolutionary process of human aspiration. The five elements, — Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether, — have their own laws and principles of action which restrict our lives to their ways of working and demand of us an obedience to their constitutional functions. Purity of food, water and air, among other things, is called for in the maintenance of health. The alleviation of hunger and thirst and heat and cold, and protection from the excesses of Nature's forces are the creature comforts that anyone would need to live a life of reasonable ease. Without this minimum of aid, the very basis of one's physical existence might become insecure. Over and above these minimum requisites, there is the call of society upon the individual, namely, loyalty and allegiance to its customs, manners and traditions, apart from a humane behaviour and conduct in respect of others around oneself. Herein, the requirements of *Varna* and *Asrama* get included, and, in addition, there is the need to observe the canons of not hurting others, being truthful with others, not appropriating the belongings of others, non-indulgence in the cravings of the senses beyond the limits permitted by the rules of health, and absence of greed in general. While these may be regarded as disciplines pertaining to one's life in the 'objective' world (*Adhibhautika-Prapancha*), they have some relevance to one's 'subjective' (*Adhyatmika*) life, as well, since these outward disciplines of conduct greatly influence and reveal one's inner character. Study of exalting literature, such as the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita, and such other powerful revelations of higher wisdom, a life of simple living and high thinking, of servicefulness and austerity in one's demeanour, are further regulative trainings in one's personal or subjective life. Beyond the objective and the subjective levels, there is the transcendent (*Adhidaivika*) Control exerted by the Omnipresent Almighty Being, through its 'manifestations', which are usually

called 'gods' in religious parlance. These 'gods' have a hierarchy of their own, and they differ in their degree of the Almighty Power which they express through their forms of manifestation. To give a rough idea of what such a hierarchy would mean, we have, as we have already noted earlier, the gradations mentioned in the Taittiriya Upanishad, — the realms of the *Gandharva*, *Pitri*, *Deva*, *Indra*, *Brihaspati* and *Prajapati*. These are names of wider and wider revelations of Reality in gradually increasing intensity, in its successive stages. The highest cosmical manifestations, however, are called *Virat*, *Hiranyagarbha* and *Isvara*, meaning its physical, subtle and causal conditions. The Aim, ultimate, is the Absolute-Brahman.

UNIVERSALITY OF INDIAN CULTURE

(SWAMI JYOTIRMAYANANDA)

In the recent times, people all over the world are becoming conscious of the values of culture. There is a great deal of talk about discovering and preserving all that is best from the cultures of the ancient past. However, the true implication of culture is not understood by the masses. To them, culture is confined to paintings and music, dances and entertainments, food and drink, or to the study of ancient relics from the ruins of the past. But all these external expressions of life are mere 'decorations' of culture, and at times, disfigurations of it.

True culture is that which aids a human being to discover his essential nature. No doubt it works through the media of music, dance, literature, and all artistic expressions of life; but it is never confined to them. The cultural patterns of dress, dance, music, painting and literature must be founded on the vision of Self-realisation. The attainment of Self-realisation is the essence of Indian culture.

Highlights of Indian Culture

- 1) The understanding that the Universe is an expression of the Self gives rise to the ideal of discovering Universal Selfhood. It is the basis for realising unity with all.
- 2) *Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah* — "Non-violence is the highest religion (virtue)." The virtue of non-violence is the root of all cultural expressions in the human personality. Since the same Self dwells in all, one must not hurt others in any way.
- 3) The understanding of the law of *karma* promotes an insight into the fact that every soul is a traveller through the world-process. Though people may possess different tastes,

temperaments and conditions of life, yet deep within they have the potentiality to reconstruct their *karmic* structures, and thus, to live a different pattern of life.

- 4) Indian culture recognises the need of patience and endurance in order to promote the higher ideals of life. Force and compulsion may seem expedient in removing the outer expressions of evil from the world, but they are uncultured expressions. They cannot remedy evil; they merely suppress it, and eventually strengthen it. But persuasion based on understanding and love goes a long way in promoting harmony and happiness in the world.
- 5) The ideal of Self-realisation must govern every aspect of one's life. This is one of the basic themes running through the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and through each Indian scripture; and this is why they are unparalleled for their clarity amongst the scriptures of the world.
- 6) Indian culture presents the spiritual art of integrating the personality in order to attain Self-realisation. Many Yogic systems have arisen in India which can lead one to this goal. But it is the art of integral Yoga which comprehends wisdom, devotion, meditation and action as four aspects of one basic movement of the soul towards the Divine Self. It is, in fact, a synthesis of *jnana, bhakti, raja and karma yoga*. It is this profound fact of Indian culture which our Gurudev H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj continued to expound throughout his life and teachings, and was never tired of singing, "Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise. Be Good, Do Good, Be Kind, Be Compassionate..."

7) Indian culture is founded on *Sanatana Dharma*—the Eternal Religion of the Vedas. It is the only culture that does not create any conflict with any other religious movement in the world. Saints and sages nourished by Indian culture have always upheld the vision of uniting all religions of the world. Therefore, they chanted the Vedic hymn: *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niramayah* — "May all be happy, may all be free from diseases." xxxxxxx

8) Indian culture envisions the ideal of Rama Rajya, wherein the political system becomes a means to spiritual freedom for man. This was exemplified in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. His principles of non-violence, truthfulness and brahmacharya contain in them the most effective solution to the raging problems of the present times.

9) Indian culture is imbued with the principles of dharma (the ethical value of life founded on Intuitive Wisdom). *Yato Dharma Tato Jayah* — "Wherever there is dharma, there is victory". This is the bold declaration of the sages of India. Dharma ought to be the basis of all man's efforts for material prosperity and vital satisfactions, in order that he may discover his aspiration for Self-realisation.

Nourishes All That Is Good

When a person is able to hold a clearer understanding about his own inner being and the world around him, he is able to bring forth all that is good and sublime from within the depths of his soul. He is able to contribute to the growth of culture just as a flower unlocks its hidden fragrance from within its heart. But when the inner horizons of the mind are overcast by the dark clouds of confusion and ignorance, his inner potentialities

are unable to grow and flourish — like a garden of flowers stricken with frost.

In the light of Indian culture, one cannot be considered truly integrated unless one promotes harmony within oneself. The process that promotes internal harmony is bound to be selfless in its outer expressions. If one experiences inner harmony — harmony of thought, feeling, will and action — he develops the capacity of endurance during adverse conditions, the art of patience towards the faltering steps of others, and the virtue of understanding that enables him to adapt to all conditions and circumstances of life.

With the growing vision of internal harmony, the hurdles on one's path begin to dissolve like ice melting in the tropical summer, and the burdens of life become light and joyous. There is no longer the need to constantly sigh and cry against uncomfortable developments. Rather, there is a joyous acceptance of all that life unfolds on the basis of its inherent universal vision.

The life that a person lives is a manifestation of Universal Life through an individualised channel of personality. And even though the external forms — the events, experiences, conditions and circumstances — are unique for every individual, yet the deeper significance of life — the sublime ideals and the profound lessons — is the same for all. Therefore, in order to render any service to the world in the most effective way, one should recognise the primary fact of the relationship existing between the individual life and the Universal Life. If this important fact is not recognised, no matter how great the individual effort, it will be of little use for the purpose of universal welfare.

It is important to understand that universal welfare is not always miraculous and spectacular. Real service to the world

cannot be rendered by mere dollars, or by external, material comforts and conveniences alone. Rather, it stems from a silent control over the gross expressions of one's nature in the form of anger, greed, pride and violence.

Vedic Wisdom

The basic purpose of human life — the attainment of Self-realisation — is the central theme of all the teachings of the Vedas and of the Upanishads. The human Spirit is the centre and the basis of all cultural, philosophical, social, political, economic, religious and mystical movements of the world. Any movement that brings the human Spirit closer to the Divine Reality of the Self becomes the nourisher of all that is true, good and beautiful in mankind; while any movement that takes this Spirit away from the Reality of the Non-dual Self creates upsurges of violence, hatred, greed and disharmony.

A culture without spiritual insight is like a body without life. In the light of Indian culture, a person considers himself a pilgrim in this transient world. As a person advances culturally, he begins to discover his essential nature by transcending the five sheaths — the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal layers of his personality. For him, his physical body, mind and senses are mere instruments which he must transcend in order to abide in his essential Self.

Therefore, a truly cultured person is described as either a sthitaprajna (one established in Intuition Knowledge), or as a Bhagavad-Bhakta (devotee of God), or as the trigunatita (beyond the three Gunas) of the Bhagavad-Gita. He is able to restrain anger, hatred, desire, passion, greed and egoism. This inner victory over his lower self enables him to experience and express the divine qualities of balance of mind, compassion, universal love, cheerfulness, humility, and all the noble virtues

that the human soul is capable of in this transient world. xxxxxxxxx

(Excerpts reproduced from a write-up published in the Souvenir released on the occasion of an “International Cultural and Spiritual Conference” organised by the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh from 22nd to 23rd September 1999 under the auspices of “Divine Decade”.)

THE GREAT CULTURE OF INDIA

(DR. S.C. BHATTACHARYA)

According to the recently published great book, *The Last Two Million Years*, "The civilisation of India is one of the most ancient in the world. Some aspects of this civilisation stretch back for more than 4000 years — even though few countries have experienced so many invasions, endured so many periods of apparent anarchy, or seen so many great empires rise and fall" (page 158). And one of the modern sages of India, Swami Sivananda of Ananda Kutir at Rishikesh, revealed the great culture of India when he wrote in the *Wisdom Light* of August, 1953: "If God is one, religion also must be one, though its forms may differ in accordance with the psychological constituents of the individuals. Forms are imaginations. Truth is beyond forms" (page 114). This is illustrated by the fact that in India there is unity in diversity.

While visiting the holy places of India mentioned in *The Mahabharata*, one's heart is touched by an unpremeditated feeling about this unity in the great culture of our country. The underlying strain of this unity is the unfathomable message of the saints and sages who have kept burning the spiritual lamp of India throughout the ages. That strain arouses the dormant hankering after Sadhana in an aspirant's mind. The aspirant is attracted towards an unceasing thought full of an inexplicable sense of mystery. But who would say when was the beginning of that message?

What others say

There are hundreds of holy personalities who have adorned the pages of the books about the sadhakas and sadhikas of India. Recently Sri Shankar Roy of West Bengal has become famous by writing fifteen volumes of biographies of such realised souls. But even those are drops in the mighty ocean of Indian heritage. Modern seekers of truth and savants from the different corners of the world

have paid glorious tributes to the great culture of India which is nothing but spiritual. Miguel Serrano, one-time Chilean Ambassador to India, travelled through the length and breadth of our country (including the Himalayas) in search of the ancient wisdom, because "I spent a year with the Master in hopes of being accepted. I was one of a group that surrounded him. The Order we formed was rumoured to have come from India... As I listened to the Master, I began to realise that if the truth was really kept in one place I should have to go and find it myself" (*The Serpent of Paradise*, pages 7&10).

Again, Dr. Paul Brunton who has devoted his life to the study of Indian philosophy and Yoga holds: "That the West has little to learn from present-day India, I shall not trouble to deny but that we have much to learn from Indian sages of the past, and from the few live today, I unhesitatingly assert... The secret India's spiritual life still exists, despite storms of political agitation which now hide it, and I have tried to give authentic record of more than one adept who has attained a strength and serenity for which we lesser mortals wistfully yearn" (*A Search in Secret India*, pages 5&7).

Further, when orientalist like Burnouf, Colebrooke, and Max Muller appeared upon learning's scene and brought out some of the literary treasures of India, the savants of the Western countries began to understand that the so-called heathens who inhabited our country were not so stupid as the Westerner's own ignorance had presumed. The great Russian philosopher-painter, Nicholas Roerich, wrote in one of his articles: "Beauty still lives in India, It beckons to us the Great Indian Path". This 'Path' was to take him later to India to settle down in the Kulu Valley and to discover for himself, and through him for others, the beauties of this land, to paint as no one has painted before him the sublime beauty and inner meaning of the Himalayas. One of the modern Buddhist scholars, Lama Anagarika Govinda, who is internationally known both for his exoteric and

esoteric knowledge has aptly observed in the article 'Meditation' contributed by him to the 'Human Dimensions' (Vol.1, No.4) published from Buffalo, New York, "The East discovered the eternal recurrence of the same conditions and similar events. The West discovered the value of the uniqueness of each event or existential conditions. The East kept its gaze fixed upon the cosmic background, the West on the individual foreground" (page 8).

Obviously we are to understand by the word 'East' mainly India as she has been the cradle of the most ancient wisdom of the world which is contained in Vedic hymns like:

"Seek that world of spiritual domain, where there is spiritual
light and everlasting peace
Where the ever-radiant lamp permeates unrestricted
Where there is no want, no fear of death
Where the realised soul is free from decay and death
Where there is eternal bliss."
(Satyakama Vidyalankar — Wisdom of the Vedas, p.5)

The great culture of India as represented in the Vedic hymns and other pre-historic vestiges left of the earliest life of man in India have been pointed out by Dr. Radha Kumud Mookherji, one of the great historians of modern India in the following words: "An inscription discovered in Mesopotamia throws light on the antiquity of the Rigveda, the earliest literary work of India and perhaps of the world. There are many old monuments in the islands of the Indian Archipelago such as Java, Sumatra and Bali, or countries like Siam and Cambodia, comprising what has been conveniently called Indonesia, which owe their origin to Indian ideals and craftsmanship and throw light on the 'expansion' of India, the growth of a Greater India beyond her boundaries" (Hindu Civilisation, Part I (page 7).

The indebtedness of Tibet to India as far as its religion is concerned is well known to the researchers, among whom the famous

Tibetologist, Giuseppe Tucci, wrote: "This was the sect ('Yellow' founded by Tsonghka-pa) that rose to power with the coming of the Dalai Lamas and won the real political control of the country. It called for a greater purity of discipline and reasserted the importance of the monastic rules of Indian Buddhism imposing ecclesiastic celibacy and forbidding the use of alcohol...He (Puton) compiled the catalogue of the two great collections, the Kangyur and the Tengyur, that contain the philosophical and liturgical literary heritage of Indian Buddhism" (Tibet, page 64).

No other words would give a fitting conclusion to this article than those of Nicholas Roerich: "Himalayas! Here is the Abode of Rishis. Here resounded the sacred Flute of Krishna. Here thundered the Blessed Gautama Buddha. Here originated all Vedas. Here lived Pandavas... Here — Aryavarta. Here is Shambala. Himalayas — Jewel of India. Himalayas — the sacred symbol of Ascent... Oh, Bharata the Beautiful! Let me send Thee my heartfelt admiration for all the greatness and inspiration which fill Thy ancient Wisdom, for glorious cities and temples, Thy meadows, Thy Deobans, Thy sacred Rivers and Majestic Himalayas".

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ENDURING VITALITY OF INDIAN CULTURE (PROF. INDRAJIT SHARMA)

There is something indestructible in India. Many civilisations of the world grew up, flourished for some time and then vanished into oblivion. Our motherland was attacked, defiled and dishonoured by the most rapacious blood-hounds. But after every invasion and act of defilement, India again rose up, like a mighty giant temporarily laid prostrate, and soon was her real self again. Glorious and wonderful India! India has tremendous capacity for revival. Despite numerous political vicissitudes and religious and social upheavals, the life-current of the national stream has flown as pure and majestic as ever before.

Unity in diversity has always been an essential feature of Indian life. India is a multi-lingual, multi-racial country, inhabited by people professing different religions. The majority of the Indians, especially the illiterate people, are stuck up in the lagoon of inertia and ignorance and are superstition-ridden, custom-bound and woe-begone. In spite of this surrounding gloom, the spark of spirituality shines brightly in the hearts of all. Our hoary scriptures like the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Puranas provide the necessary cultural roots for sustenance and form the bedrock of the national edifice. Besides the scriptures, the Hindu law and Hindu social polity, Indian paintings, dance, music, architecture and sculpture, and countless customs and traditions constitute the unifying forces of the nation.

The very air of India is surcharged with religion and spirituality. No foreign power ever dared poke its dirty nose into the religious life of the Indian people. The moment they committed this folly, they had to pay through their nose. In India, people drink religiously, eat religiously, marry religiously, robe religiously

and even rob religiously and then pine to die religiously. The factor of religious fervour has kept the nation alive, despite many ups and downs.

India is a land of saints and sages. It is a *Punya Bhumi* trodden by the greatest of men. It is a land of fasts and festivals. These things add piety and splendour to life. The whole land is dotted over with countless temples where the devout assemble for prayer and penance. Many of these temples carry legends behind them and are of historical importance. Many others are noted for their wealth of architectural beauty and aesthetic charm.

The Himalayas, the Ganga and other holy mountains and rivers stretch through the length and breadth of India, inspiring people to lofty idealism and holy action. The ever pure Ganga is inextricably mixed up with the sentiments of the Indian people and has played a powerful role in the emotional integration of the Indian people. The Indians do not consider their dead emancipated until their ashes mingle with the holy waters of the Ganga.

Unique Personality

There is no other land in the world where a person renounces kingship and kingdom for the sake of God. India can boast of having produced many persons who spurned power and pelf in their quest for the eternal truth. King Siddhartha, who became the Buddha, is the most glorious example of such a sacrifice. Renunciation is still the cardinal principle for the pursuit of spiritual life in India. A Sannyasi is still worshipped by the Indian people who touch his feet in order to purify themselves.

Unfortunately, at the present day, even in India, religion is being commercialised. Most unholy acts are committed in the holy name of God. We see so-called centres of spirituality which

are no better than religious shops selling out spirituality to fake seekers. Some of the so-called saints who have gone abroad have already brought a bad name to Indian religion and culture by their pseudo-religious life. All these evil practices in the name of religion need to be nipped in the bud and the old cultural and spiritual values which are fast obbing away need to be restored and given an honourable place in the scheme of life.

Simple living and high thinking is the hall-mark of the Indian way of life; it is necessarily exempt from fraud, hypocrisy, ostentation and sophistication. Unfortunately, the western way of life is making deep inroads into our cultural and social pattern. Some of the modern educated youth delight in aping the Westerners in the matter of eating, drinking, dressing and thinking. This mad pursuit of transitory pleasures of life has to be stopped in order to restore Indian culture to its pristine glory.

After all is said, India still holds the master-key to unlock the mysteries of the higher spiritual life. Yoga and Vedanta are the priceless legacy of India to the whole world. The Gita is a living scripture, embodying the quintessence of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It is a vade mecum for practical spiritual living.

Seekers after truth from all over the world still wend their way to India to seek enlightenment at the feet of Indian Yogis. This is because there are still persons in India, though very few, who can give genuine guidance in spiritual practices to seeking souls. Scholarly Indian saints like Swami Chidananda, Swami Ranganathananda and Swami Chinmayananda have toured foreign countries to disseminate Indian Yoga, religion and culture. They preach pure spiritual truths as embodied in our ageless scriptures. As a result of their preaching, there is a markedly increasing interest abroad in Indian spirituality.

Universal Religion

All religions in the world, except Hinduism, are built around individual personalities. No human being, however saintly he may be, can escape the limitations of embodied human existence. Consequently, no system of philosophy or religion founded by such saintly Masters can be fool-proof. The Vedantic truths, on the other hand, are divine revelations which have stood the test of time and of direct intuitive experience. If any concept of God-realisation has entitlement to a world religion, it can be Vedanta and Vedanta alone. According to Swami Sivananda, "Vedanta is neither creed nor ceremony. It boldly proclaims that you are the all-pervading, immortal Atman or Soul in essence". Vedanta teaches oneness of life and unity of consciousness. It is the doctrine of complete identity with all that exists in the world and beyond. This is indeed a golden path to world unity for which the world today is clamouring and struggling.

To become a Vedantin, one must first become a Yogi. Yoga points the way to Vedanta. Perfect discipline of the mind is Yoga. Complete inner purity is essential to such discipline.

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THE RELEVANCE OF INDIA

(BALDEO SAHAI)

India is among the seven most ancient civilisations of the world. Whereas some of the civilisations have disappeared, the continuity of others has been interrupted by one cataclysm or the other. This country has the unique distinction of enjoying a continuous existence extending over more than 6000 years. That speaks about the inherent strength of the Indian culture. Has this India any relevance to the modern age?

A modern man is not much interested in the past. He judges a country by the present, and that in case of India does not seem to be quite complimentary. Most of the urban elite look like poor copies of the West. Many of them are prepared to do anything to make a fast buck. Selfishness and corruption have also penetrated the villages. In the face of such a situation to talk of a glorious past sounds an anachronism, a cruel joke.

Let us however get a few facts first. 1) The present is real, the past is also real. The present is in flux, the past is permanent; it has been documented by perceptive scholars and trustworthy travellers. 2) There have been saints and satans in all ages and all countries. The point to ponder is: who represents the people a Gandhi or a Godse. 3) A few decades or a few centuries are a mere fraction in the history of a nation of over 6000 years vantage. Every tide is followed by an ebb. The two are one like the pulses of Time. 4) The rising and falling of waves is not the reality; water is real. The ever-changing material world is not the reality; the changeless that lies behind is real. The fluctuating ups and downs of nations is not the reality; their genius is real.

And what is the genius of India? Scholars of penetrating intellect and impeccable integrity have delved deep into the mystic of Indian thought. They have found it elevating and inspiring.

Some sincerely believe that India is the only country which can provide solution to the ills of the modern world. The great French savant, Sylvain Levi says: "From Persia to the Chinese Sea, from the icy regions of Siberia to the islands of Java and Borneo, from Oceania to Sacotra, India has propagated her beliefs, her tales, her civilisation; she has left indelible imprints upon one-fourth of the human race in the course of a long succession of centuries. She has the right to reclaim in universal history the rank that ignorance has refused her for a long time and hold her place amongst the great nations summarising and symbolising the spirit of humanity".

Paradise on Earth

About a hundred years ago while delivering his lectures at Cambridge in 1882, Professor Max Muller said: "If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow — in some parts a very paradise on earth — I should point to India". The professor continued, "If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which well deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant — I should point to India. And If I were to ask myself from what literature, we in Europe... may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly humane a life, not only this life, but a transfigured and eternal life — again I should point to India". Here is what a well-known modern American historian, Will Durant, has to say: "India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother,

through the village community, of self government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways, the mother of us all".

Many travellers in the past like Megasthenes, Fa-Hien, Hwan Chwang, Nicolo Conti and Al-Beruni went round the country during the reigns of various kings. Most of them have given gushing accounts of what they saw. They found the kings just and generous and the people generally honest, patriotic and prosperous. The visitors were equally frank in pointing out the failings of the people they met. We need not mention the works and opinions of Indian intellectuals and seers like Adi Sankaracharya, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda, Dr. Radhakrishnan, whose insight into and interpretation of Indian thought is naturally more authentic.

Inner World

The people of this land have excelled in many fields, and much of it is relevant today. Where they have excelled the most is in the exploration of the inner world of mind, in the quest of the supreme beatitude. Their basic book of knowledge comprises the four Vedas — Rg, Yajur, Sama and the Atharva. A huge corpus of literature has been raised round these and the essence of their philosophy is contained in the Upanishads. Many world scholars have devoted themselves to the study of ancient Indian literature and done pioneering work in commenting upon it. Mr. R.T.H. Griffith pays a well deserved homage when he says: "These four Vedas are considered to be of divine origin and to have existed from all eternity. The Rishis or the great poets to whom the hymns are ascribed were merely inspired seers, who saw or received them by sight and directly from the Supreme Creator. In accordance with this belief, these sacred books have been preserved and handed with the most reverential care from generation to generation". Mon Leon Delbos says: "There is no monument of Greece or Rome more precious than the Rg Veda. About Upanishads, the great French

philosopher Schopenhauer says: "In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death"..

Indian Genius

The Indian thinkers tried to trace the roots of the tree of creation, the very source of the universe. And they found after deep meditation that the source of all what is seen, and unseen, is only one. The endless variety of names and forms that is seen around is the manifestation of the same reality. The idea has been poetically conveyed in seven superb stanzas of the Naradiya Sukta. As translated by Jean Le Mee, the first three run as follows:

'Neither non-being nor being was yet,
Neither was airy space nor heavens beyond:
What was enveloped? and where? sheltered by whom?
And was there water? bottomless, unfathomed?
Neither was there death nor immortality,
Nor was there any sign then of night or day:
Totally windless, by itself, the one breathed:
Beyond that, indeed, nothing whatever was.
In the Principle, darkness concealed darkness;
Undifferentiated surge was this whole world;
The pregnant point covered by the form matrix
From conscious fervour, mightily broughtforth the One".

In the beginning "the one breathed" and an "Undifferentiated surge was this whole world." They arrived at the conclusion that there is only one reality, referred to by them as Brahma, who is called by different names — *ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti*. The entire universe is 'covered', 'pervaded' by the same Supreme Lord *isavasyam idam sarvam*. This eternal truth forms the main

subject of over hundred extant Upanishads. The quintessence of this exposition has been succinctly incorporated in Lord Krishna's *Srimad Bhagavad-Gita*. Since these seers knew their subject inside out through intense personal experience, they have been able to put across the profoundest and the most secret knowledge in the most simple language through absorbing allegories and stories. The exposition of this eternal truth is the greatest contribution of India to the thought of the world. Its study is more relevant today that it was ever before.

The View of Science

It is often said that the experience of the Ultimate Reality is purely personal, cannot be verified, and is therefore 'unscientific'. Let us see what modern science has found about the nature of the universe. Western scientists have worked very hard for a few centuries to analyse, synthesise and understand the properties and behaviour of the physical world. So far they have discovered over a hundred elements. They have found that all things are made of elements, or their compounds. With the help of highly sophisticated equipment like electron microscope they have delved deeper and analysed the elements. These are formed of atoms of various weights and configuration. But the atom is not the smallest unit; it has neutrons, protons and a specific number of electrons revolving round the nucleus in a more or less fixed orbit. This nucleus at the centre, says Prof. Andrade in *An Approach to Modern Physics*, is not like a definite body but "rather as a centre of electric force pervading the surrounding space". A strong fire, he explains, would mark out a kind of limit which none would approach, though there will be no actual walls. So is the boundary of nucleus around which clusters a swarm of electrons, some closer, others far out. These electrons are the source of unlimited energy. In the ultimate analysis of matter, the scientists have found that an invisible energy is the source of everything. The thinkers of India arrived at the same conclusion though through a different route. The West has looked without, the

East has looked within. The scientists have followed the inductive method — matter, compounds, elements, atoms, energy. The Indian philosophers start with the source, the Supreme Energy which was modified in grosser and grosser forms as ether (*akasa*), wind (*vayu*), fire (*agni*), water (*jala*) and earth (*prithvi*). The entire external and internal world is constituted of their combinations in varying proportions.

Richie Calder, the well-known British scientist, has beautifully described the process of creation in his book, *Man and the Cosmos*, with the analogy of a continuous film record of a nuclear explosion, its gradual growth into a monstrous mushroom cloud and then final dispersal far and wide. "Then we reverse the film," continues Calder, "the way they do in trick movies when they put the high driver back on the springboard, and we see the mushroom cloud reducing back in the dimensions of the bomb and, if we could follow, into the nuclei of the atom." The Western scientists begin with the visible monstrous cloud and stage by stage finally reach the nuclei of the atom, the source, the energy. The Indian seers say that there is no difference between the two. The apparent external world is born of Brahma — in a manner of saying — is sustained by Brahma, and is ultimately dissolved into Brahma. That is why perhaps the British scholar, W.D. Brown, has said in his book, *Superiority of the vedic Religion*, "It recognises but one God. It is a thoroughly scientific religion, where religion and science meet hand in hand. Here theology is based upon science and philosophy." The French philosopher, Jacolliot concurs with Brown. He says in *The Bible in India*: "Astonishing fact! The Hindu revelation (the Vedas) is of all revelations the only one whose ideas are in perfect harmony with modern science".

For the benefit of those who may not be able to absorb and assimilate this subtle abstract truth, the Indian saints suggest other methods of understanding the Ultimate Reality. They devised the worship of a God with forms, with attributes, with powers to grant them boons and excuse their acts of

omission and commission. The devotee could offer Him flowers and food, burn incense before Him and pour out his heart in supplication or confession. He could take numerous forms, male or female, as suited to the temperament of the person. But the basic idea is that He or She is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Everybody, even thing, is His or Her manifestation and the devotee must offer selfless service to all living creatures. His ideal is to completely surrender himself to his ishtadevata and regard himself to be merely His instrument to carry out His will on the plane of human existence. It is not like the polytheism of Egypt and Greece and Rome or of some of the Indian Puranas. It is a higher Polytheism which merges in Pantheism. The worshipper here comes to a point when he does not think of this God or that but of the Divine Being, often most poetically apprehended. Max Muller preferred to call it henotheism but it is hardly much different from the Vedantic monotheism. From the fourteenth century onward any number of saints emerged in different parts of the country — Ramanujacharya and Madhavacharya in the South, Sant Jnaneshwar and Tukaram in Maharashtra, Tulsidas and Surdas in Utter Pradesh, Guru Nanak in the Punjab, Narsi Mehta in Gujarat, Mahaprabhu Chailanya in Bengal and Sankardeva in Assam to name a few — who popularised the path of devotion.

Some rationalists who had no inclination for burning the lamp or swinging joss sticks before an idol, plunged themselves into action. Here also India has a very important message to convey to the entire world. That message is that all our actions should be unselfish, unattached, impersonal, done as part of our duty. Nothing should be done for self-aggrandizement, every act of ours should be saturated with self-surrender. Lord Krishna's Gita is one of the best exponents of this philosophy — unattached action. Many people in India, and elsewhere in the world, practise this precept in their daily life. They also reach the same goal and realise the truth.

Practical Wisdom

India offers these three paths for experiencing the eternal bliss, the ultimate truth. That truth is that the source of all external and internal phenomena is Energy, Brahma. But how this discovery, or experience, is relevant to modern man?

This truth is not merely theoretical; a number of practical messages emerge out of its understanding. (1) If Indian thought establishes that there is only one reality — and science confirms it — what directly follows is that all the diversity we see around is superficial, skin-deep. Every form and the name we give it, has emanated and proliferated from a single source, from the one without a second. As the great vedantist, Adi Sankara observed, since a million articles made of gold, in spite of variety in design and description, are nothing but gold, so everything that has emerged out of Brahma can be nothing but Brahma. That establishes the brotherhood of all human beings, nay of all living beings — *vasutdhaiva kutumbakam*, the entire earth is a family. (2) All parts of the whole are inter-dependent. Look at a human body having about 100 trillion cells, all developing out of a single zygote, one fertilized egg, one source. There are many specialised colonies of cells — of heart, liver, lung, kidney, brain and so on. But all are inter-dependent and, in a healthy body, function in perfect harmony. If I have a boil on a little finger, or pain in a single tooth, the entire body suffers. Disaffection, disturbance, chaos and killing in a small part of the earth is bound to vitiate the entire environment. If not nipped in the bud, a minor incident might lead to a conflagration. *Yatha pinde tatha brahmande* — as the body so the universe. (3) Peace and prosperity is indivisible. Whenever and wherever, the peoples have helped each other, lived a life of selfless service, followed the path, the *dharma*, virtue, they have enjoyed peace. As Gandhiji used to say; there is enough in this world for everybody's need but not for everybody's greed. Greed creates

distrust and disparity. Disparity leads to envy, anger, anarchy. If a few countries corner most of the world's resources, the other nations will be rendered poorer. Who will then pay for the rich countries' products? Sooner or later the system will collapse. Therefore every son of the great Father who is in heaven should be enabled to develop his physical and mental capacities to the maximum and to contribute to the total prosperity.

These are a few practical conclusions that emerge out of the grand vedantic vision that the whole world is permeated by one Eternal Intelligence — *isavasyam idam sarvam* — and thou art that — *tat tvam asi*. Let the thinkers and intellectuals of the world critically examine this concept and test its veracity. Once it is found to be a fact, we have to assimilate it, radiate it, live it. Our senses are externalised, they look out and are prone to regard material objects as real. To pierce the veil of ignorance and experience the reality that lies behind and beyond is an uphill task. But constant meditation upon the Ultimate Reality as often and as long as possible, through whatever path we choose, will help a person to rise above names and forms. Such meditation will certainly make a man humble, expand his consciousness, and help him to evaluate personal, national and international problems in a better perspective. These ideas and ideals are of universal value and hold good for all peoples at all times. And it is no mean contribution of India, rather the only hope — corroborated by the findings of modern science — to remodel this world.

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Books suggested for further study

1. All About Hinduism — Swami Sivananda
2. Bliss is Within — Swami Chidananda
3. Sadhana — The Spiritual Way — Swami Krishnananda.

LESSON - 9

RELIGIOUS PURSUIT
(DHARMA or ETHICAL VALUE) —
THE FIRST, FOREMOST AND THE
FOUNDATIONAL GRAND OBJECT
OF ASPIRATION OF
IDEAL HUMAN LIFE

GRAND OBJECTS OF HUMAN ASPIRATION

“The Hindu culture has given us four main objectives to strive for. These four are called, in Sanskrit, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Moksha means spiritual perfection, and Dharma means a life of purity, truth and goodness. It is ‘to be good and to do good’. It is to feel others as our own selves, sympathise with the sorrow of others and serve others. While we seek for joy in our own life, we try, at the same time, to give happiness to others. This is Dharma. Artha is to earn wealth and other things necessary for life. So here they do not rule out the normal life in the material being. Kama means the fulfillment of your proper and legitimate desires. So in normal material life, fulfillment of legitimate desires is one of the four objectives. But the significance you have to note is that this material life and the normal life of fulfilling desires are placed in between Dharma and Moksha. Therefore, while you live a life of material activity and normal life of fulfilling your legitimate desires you have to see that nothing in this life contradicts the prime principle of virtue and goodness and you must also see that while you live in this normal life you do not forget the ultimate goal of divine perfection. Therefore, be guided by the principles of virtue, truth and goodness; and guided by these principles live a normal life in this world and, as you are thus living, try to move to that real goal. Let virtue be the foundation of your life. Let divine perfection be the ultimate goal of your life.”

— Swami Chidananda

RELIGIOUS PURSUIT (DHARMA or ETHICAL VALUE)

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

(A) RELIGION

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

Religion comes from the Latin word “religio”, which consists of two words viz., “re” (back) and “ligare” (to bring). That which brings the soul back to God is religion. Religion shows the way for the attainment of God-realisation.

Religion satisfies the deep inward craving in man who is not always content with leading merely an animal existence but wants spiritual consolation, solace and peace. Man cannot live by bread alone. A time comes in the life of many of us when mere worldly prosperity does not satisfy us and we hanker after something more. In the case of many more, trials and tribulations of life turn their attention to spiritual solace.

Religion is the relationship between the three fundamental principles — God, world and the individual. Religion gives solace to the weary pilgrim in this earth-plane. It explains life’s mystery to him. It shows the path to the immortal abode.

Religion, God, Dharma, Karma, world are eternal and beginningless. They are inseparable. Religion shows the way to attain God or salvation or the final beatitude, or freedom from births and deaths.

Religion contains philosophy, mythology, ethics, etc. It prescribes various kinds of Sadhana or religious practices to suit various types of Sadhakas.

Real religion is one. It is the religion of the heart. It is the religion of love. It is the religion of the Vedas or Vedanta. It is the religion of Silence. It is life everlasting in the Imperishable Absolute or the Eternal. Real religion is transcendental. It is above the senses, the mind and the intellect. It is *Turiya* or sleepless

sleep, where there is neither sound nor colour, neither day nor night, neither light nor darkness, neither pleasure nor pain, neither virtue nor vice.

Religion consists in doing good to others, in the practice of love, mercy, truthfulness, and purity in all walks of life. Religion is practical philosophy; philosophy is theoretical religion. Philosophy is for ever searching, inquiring, questioning. Religion is sensing, realising, experiencing.

One religion is as good as another. One road or path to the Supreme is as good as any other road or path. Cows have different colours, but the colour of milk is one. There are different kinds of roses, but the scent is one. Religion is one, but many are its forms of practice. Diversity is the order of creation. Religion is no exception to it.

NEED FOR RELIGION

A religious life is the greatest of all blessings. It lifts a man from the mire of worldliness, impurity, infidelity. Intellect is vain if it is not illuminated by religion. Religion does what philosophy can never do. If you live in accordance with the rules of religion, you will attain wisdom, immortality, everlasting peace and eternal bliss.

Religion is the foundation of society, the source of all goodness and happiness, the basis of the virtue and prosperity of the individual, and through the individuals, of the nation. Civilisation, order, morality — all that elevate man and give peace to the nation — are the fruits of the practice of religion.

THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGION

The ultimate source of religion is God. God is the primary source of all knowledge. By a comparative study of the principal religions of the world, you will understand that the newer religions can be traced to older ones, the older ones to still older ones and so on, till you reach the most ancient and primitive religion of humanity.

There has never been, any real invention in the realm of religion. The fundamental principles which constitute its essence are as old as the human race or this world. They were revealed by God to the Rishis or Seers in the beginning of creation or Kalpa, They are found in the Vedas, which are admitted as the oldest religious books or scriptures in the library of mankind.

Scientists may have wonderful new discoveries or inventions in the realm of matter but there will never come a time when you will be able to know any new truth about God. You may have a better understanding, a more thorough realisation of the nature of God, but you will never be able to discover a new attribute of God or Brahman, because the knowledge of God has not been originated by the human mind. So is the case also with all religious knowledge. There never has been, there never shall be, any real invention or discovery in the sphere of religion. There never was a religious founder, who had invented a new religion, or revealed a new truth. These founders are all transmitters only, but not original makers. There has been no entirely new religion, since the beginning of the world. Religion is ultimately of divine origin.

VEDAS — THE SOURCE OF ALL RELIGIONS

The Vedas are the ultimate source of all religions. They are the fountainhead from which the stream of religious knowledge has flowed through the channels of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism. The common truths and principles of all religions are ultimately derived from the Vedas only. All religions in essence can be traced ultimately to the Vedas.

At the present moment all religions contain a mixture of truth, which is divine, and error which is human. The fundamentals or essentials of all religions are the same. There is difference only in the non-essentials. The apparent differences in religions are due to a misconception or misconstruction of the long-

forgotten truth of the Vedas on which they are ultimately founded. All systems of religion are equally divine and true. The conflicting points are all due to misconception and misconstruction of the truths on account of prejudice, bigotry, lack of purity of heart and subtlety and purity of intellect, and perverted condition of the intellect of people.

The great majority of religions had their origin in prehistoric times. Hence there are no genuine documents or trustworthy traditions concerning them.

RISE OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism are the six great religions of the world. There is no founder for Hinduism. All the other religions have their founders. They are named after the name of the founder. Jainism is only another form of Buddhism. Sikhism is based chiefly on Hinduism and partly on Mohammedanism. Brahmoism is born of Hinduism and Christianity and so on with other minor religions.

Whenever any important truth of religion was suppressed by the arrogance and selfishness of the priestly class or forgotten through the ignorance of the people, there appeared a great Saint or Prophet or Religious Teacher. He emphasised that truth, removed the dross which had concealed or obscured it and made it shine in its original brilliance, purity, splendour and glory.

In this way every new religion was only an endeavour to reform the older religion as it then existed and a protest against its abuses.

When in olden times people forgot all about the Vedic monotheism, there arose Zoroaster. He preached the worship of one God, Ahura Mazda, and condemned the worship of Devas.

When the religion of the Vedas degenerated into a blind observance of rites and sacrifice of animals, when the Sudras were treated with contempt by the Brahmins, there appeared

the compassionate Buddha, who stopped killing of animals and raised the status of Sudras.

When the priests of Judaism became arrogant, there arose Jesus to purify Judaism. When Christianity had also degenerated into idolatry and superstition, there appeared Mohamed to preach his monotheism.

When Hinduism degenerated on account of creeping in of superstitious beliefs and false worship, various reformers appeared to purge Hinduism of its superstitions and wrong beliefs and observances.

Sri Sankara appeared to remove wrong beliefs and abuses in Buddhism and Jainism and established Kevala Adwaita or absolute monism. Sri Ramanuja appeared to teach Bhakti and make people practise devotion and realise God while remaining in the world.

If people become cruel, a teacher like Buddha appears to preach *Ahimsa* or non-injury. If they become timid, another teacher like Guru Govind Singh comes to infuse courage in them. If they become inclined towards rigorous *Tapas*, a teacher like Ramanuja comes and preaches "Realise while enjoying in the world".

Thus all great religious teachers were original reformers. They tried to improve the existing religions and to do good in their own way to suit the time and condition of the society in which they were born.

THE UNITY THAT UNDERLIES ALL RELIGIONS

All prophets are messengers of God. They are great Yogins and realised souls, who have had divine, intuitive perception of God. Their words are infallible and sacred. The Koran or the Zend-Avesta or the Bible is as much a sacred book as the Bhagavad-Gita. All contain the essence of divine wisdom. Ahuramazda, Isvara, Allah, Jehovah are different

names for one God.

Truth is neither Hindu nor Mohammedan, nor Buddhist nor Christian! Truth is one, homogeneous, eternal substance. The follower of the religion of Truth walks on the path of light, peace, wisdom, power and bliss.

Man forgets all about his religion on account of ignorance, or lust for power and greed. He has become irreligious. So he has come down to the level of a brute. He has lost all sense of morality. He does havoc. He creates mischief. He stabs, loots, and burns houses. The law of the jungle prevails.

Many preach Buddhism, but no one gives up desires and Himsa. Many preach Christianity, but no one practises love and forgiveness. Many preach Islam, but no one recognises the brotherhood of man. Many preach Hinduism, but no one realises the Divinity in all. Preaching has become the livelihood of men, while practice has become their object of scorn.

Hence the world is wicked, not for want of truth, nor on account of religions; but, alas, it is wicked for the lack of true followers of these ideals and religions.

What is needed is proper education of the followers of all religions. Place the practical tenets of their own religion before the followers of that religion, and devise ways and means of enabling them to express these tenets in their daily life. Without practice, idealism creates fatalism in man. Unless knowledge alters one's life, it is useless. Selflessness and love are not creeds to be taught, but ideals to be exemplified, demonstrated and radiated. Therefore, let everyone practise his own religion and strive to attain the goal. Let religion create saints and Yogins, rather than Mandirs, Masjids and Churches.

HINDUISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

A REVEALED RELIGION

Hinduism is the religion of the Hindus. It is the oldest of all living religions. Hinduism is not a man-made religion. It was not founded by any single person. It is not based on a set of dogmas preached by a particular set of teachers. It was not started as a system, like Islam or Christianity. It is the product of the seers of the Vedas. It was developed from age to age by the teachings of Avatars, Rishis, Vedas, the Upanishads, the Gita and the Itihasas. It will exist as long as the world lasts. There is a peculiar, mysterious spiritual force that is ingrained in the heart of every Hindu.

Hinduism is also known by the names Sanatana Dharma and Vaidika Dharma. Sanatana Dharma means the eternal religion, the Ancient Law. Vaidika Dharma means the religion of the Vedas. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of Hinduism.

A RELIGION OF FREEDOM

Hinduism allows absolute freedom to the rational mind of man. Hinduism never demands any undue restraint upon the freedom of human reason, the freedom of thought, feeling and will of man.

Hinduism is a religion of freedom. It allows the widest freedom in matters of faith and worship. It allows absolute freedom to the human reason and heart with regard to questions such as the nature of God, soul, creation, form of worship, and goal of life. It does not force anybody to accept particular dogmas or forms of worship. It allows everybody to reflect, investigate, enquire and cogitate. Hence, all sorts of religious faiths, various forms of worship or Sadhana, diverse kinds of rituals and customs, have found their

honourable place side by side within Hinduism, and are cultured and developed in harmonious relationship with one another.

Hinduism, unlike other religions, does not dogmatically assert that the final emancipation is possible only through its means and not through any other. It is only a means to an end, and all means which will ultimately lead to the end are equally approved.

The religious hospitality of Hinduism is proverbial. Hinduism is extremely catholic and liberal. This is the fundamental feature of Hinduism. Hinduism pays respects to all religions. It does not revile any other religion. It accepts and honours truth, wherever it may come from and whatever garb it may put on.

HINDU MYTHOLOGY

In every religion, there are three parts, viz., philosophy, mythology and ritual. Philosophy is the essence of religion. It sets forth its basic principles or fundamental doctrines or tenets, the goal, and the means of attaining it. Mythology explains and illustrates philosophy by means of legendary lives of great men or of supernatural beings. Ritual gives a still more concrete form to philosophy so that everyone may understand it. Ritual consists of forms and ceremonies.

Mythology is a part of every religion. Mythology is concretised philosophy. Mythology is the science which investigates myths or fables or legends founded on remote events, especially those made in the early period of a people's existence. Mythology inspires the readers through precepts and laudable examples, and goads them to attain perfection or the highest ideal. The abstract teachings and subtle ideas are made highly interesting through the garb of stories, parables, legends, allegories and narratives. The sublime and abstract philosophical ideas and ideals of Hinduism are taken straight to the heart of the masses through impressive stories. Mythology is slightly mixed up with a little history. It is difficult to make a fine distinction between history and mythology.

There are great truths behind the ancient mythology of Hinduism. You cannot ignore a thing simply because it has a garb of mythology. Do not argue. Shut up your mouth. Keep your intellect at a respectable distance when you study mythology. Intellect is a hindrance. It will delude you. Give up arrogance, vanity. Cultivate love for imagery. Sit like a child and open your heart freely. You will comprehend the great truths revealed by mythology. You will penetrate into the hearts of the Rishis and sages who wrote the mythology. You will really enjoy mythology now.

You study geography through maps. There is no real country or town in a map, but it helps you to know a great deal about the different countries. Similar is the case with myths. You can grasp the subtle, philosophical truths through myths only. The object of myth and legend is merely to lure the mind to the truths of religion.

EMPHASIS ON PRACTICE

Hinduism is not a religion of mere theories. It is eminently practical. In no religion will you find such a variety of Yoga practised, and such sublime unique philosophy expounded.

Hinduism provides spiritual food and Yoga Sadhana for all sorts of people to suit their temperaments, capacities, tastes, stages of spiritual development, and conditions of life. It prescribes Yoga Sadhana even for a scavenger or a cobbler to attain God-realisation, while doing his ordinary avocation in the world. Hindu Yoga and Vedanta teachers lay great stress on self-restraint, *Tapas*, renunciation and practical Sadhana, which are best calculated to control the mind and the senses and unfold the Divinity within or attain Self-realisation.

Religion is the practical aspect of philosophy. Philosophy is the rational aspect of religion. The philosophy of Hinduism is not armchair philosophy. It is not meant for intellectual curiosity and vain discussion. Hindu philosophy is a way of life. The philosopher of Hinduism seriously reflects after hearing the Srutis, does Atma-vichara,

constantly meditates, and then attains Self-realisation or Atma-sakshatkara. Moksha is his goal. He attempts to attain Jivanmukti now and here.

A RELIGION OF SPIRITUALISATION OF HUMAN LIFE

Religion is spiritualisation of human life for a Hindu. Religious culture is really the culture of freedom for him. Religion governs all the departments of Hindu life. He must realise the freedom of the soul in every department of life. Religion affords the greatest scope for him for the culture of true freedom. Religion is the only way to him for the realisation of perfect freedom in life.

It is in India alone that every man knows something of philosophy. The cowherd who tends the cattle, the peasant who ploughs the fields, the boatman who pulls at his oar, sing songs replete with philosophical truths. Even the barber repeats OM NAMAHA SIVAYA, SIVOHAM before he takes up the razor. The Paramahansa Sannyasins, the itinerant monks of Hinduism, have disseminated the highest of Vedanta from door to door. In exchange for a handful of rice, they have distributed from door to door, through religious songs, the priceless gems of Hindu religion and philosophy.

LAW OF KARMA

The law of Karma is one of the fundamental doctrines of not only Hinduism, but also of Buddhism and Jainism. As a man sows, so shall he reap. This is the law of Karma.

Desires produce Karma. You work and exert to acquire the objects of your desire. Karma produces its fruits as pain and pleasure. You will have to take births after births to reap the fruits of your Karmas. This is the law of Karma.

The doctrine of reincarnation or transmigration of souls is a fundamental tenet of Hinduism. You will not cease to exist after death. Before this birth you have passed through countless lives.

The word 'reincarnation' literally means coming again into a physical body. The individual soul takes again a mortal vehicle. The word 'transmigration' means passing from one plane to another—passing into a new body.

The doctrine of rebirth is a corollary to the law of Karma. The differences of disposition that are found between one individual and another must be due to one's respective past actions. Past action implies past birth. Further, all your Karmas cannot certainly bear fruit in this birth alone. Therefore, there must be another birth for enjoying the remaining actions. Each soul has a series of births and deaths. Births and deaths will continue till you attain knowledge of the Self.

You do not come into the world in total forgetfulness and in utter darkness. You are born with certain memories and habits acquired in the previous births. Desires take their origin from previous experiences. We find that none is born without desire. Every being is born with some desires, which are associated with the things enjoyed by him in the past life. The desire proves the existence of his soul in the previous lives.

Man contains within himself infinite possibilities. The magazine of power and wisdom is within him. He has to unfold the Divinity within. This is the object of living and dying.

HINDU SECTS

A foreigner is struck with astonishment when he hears about the diverse sects and creeds of Hinduism. But, these varieties are really an ornament to Hinduism. They, certainly, are not its defects. There are various types of mind and temperament. So, there should be various faiths also. This is but natural. This is the cardinal tenet of Hinduism. There is room in Hinduism for all types of souls—from the highest to the lowest—for their growth and evolution.

The term Hinduism is most elastic. It includes a number of sects and cults, allied, but different in many important points. Hinduism

has, within its fold, various schools of Vedanta, Saivism, Saktism, Vaishnavism, etc. It has various cults and creeds. It is more a league of religions than a single religion with a definite creed. It is a fellowship of faiths. It is a federation of philosophies. It accommodates all types of men. It prescribes spiritual food for everybody, according to his qualification and growth. This is the beauty of this magnanimous religion. This is the glory of Hinduism. Hence there is no conflict among the various cults and creeds.

Sanatan Dharmists, Arya Samajists, Deva Samajists, Jains, Sikhs and Brahmo Samajists are all Hindus only. Despite all the differences of metaphysical doctrines, modes of religious discipline, and forms of ritualistic practices and social habits prevalent in the Hindu society, there is an essential uniformity in the conception of religion, and in the outlook on life and the world, among all sections of Hindus.

GLORY OF HINDUISM AND THE REASONS FOR ITS SURVIVAL

Mohammedan emperors ruled India for seven hundred years. The British ruled India for two hundred years. Some joined Islam through force. The Mohammedan emperors and the British were not able to convert the whole of India. Still the glory of Hinduism persists. The culture of Hinduism prevails. Nothing can shake its greatness and root.

Hinduism is neither asceticism nor illusionism, neither polytheism nor pantheism. It is a synthesis of all types of religious experiences. It is a whole and complete view of life. It is characterised by wide toleration, deep humanity and high spiritual purpose. It is free from fanaticism. That is the reason why it has survived the attacks of the followers of other great religions of the world.

Hinduism is extremely catholic, liberal, tolerant and elastic. No religion is so very elastic and tolerant like Hinduism. Hinduism

is very stern and rigid regarding the fundamentals. It is very elastic in readjusting to the externals and non-essentials. That is the reason why it has succeeded in living through millennia.

The foundation of Hinduism has been laid on the bedrock of spiritual truths. The entire structure of Hindu life is built on eternal truths, the findings of the Hindu Rishis or seers. That is the reason why this structure has lasted through scores of centuries.

Hinduism stands unrivalled in the depth and grandeur of its philosophy. Its ethical teachings are lofty, unique and sublime. It is highly flexible and adapted to every human need. It is a perfect religion by itself. It is not in need of anything from any other religion. No other religion has produced so many great saints, great patriots, great warriors, great Pativratas. The more you know of the Hindu religion, the more you will honour and love it. The more you study it, the more it will enlighten you and satisfy your heart.

BUDDHISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

‘Om Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma-Sambuddhasa!’ ‘Honour to the Blessed One, the Holy One, All-Wise!’

Buddham Saranam gacchami :
Dharmam Saranam gacchami :
Sangham Saranam gacchami :
 To the Buddha for Refuge I go:
 To the Teaching for Refuge I go:
 To the Order for Refuge I go:

Buddha was born on the border of Nepal about 620 B.C. and died about 543 B.C. at Kusinagara in Oudh.

Buddhism was founded by Gautama Sakya Muni, the rebel child of Hinduism. It sprang up directly from Hinduism. Buddha never thought of founding a new religion. He made no new discovery. He was proclaiming only the ancient and pure form of religion which had prevailed among the Hindus.

The pure and noble religion of the Vedas and the Upanishads had degenerated into dead forms, unmeaning rites and ceremonies. The Brahmins claimed honour merely by their birth. They neglected the study of the Vedas and the practice of virtue. The Brahmins were treated with undue leniency, and the Sudras with undue severity. In order that flesh-eating might have the sanction of religion, animals were slaughtered and sacrificed in Yajnas. Such was the state of society at the time when Buddha appeared. His tender and loving heart could not bear the shedding of so much, innocent blood in the sacred name of religion. Buddha declared that merit, and not birth, determined the position of a man in society. The persecuted Sudras joined him in large numbers and he unconsciously became the founder of a new faith.

Buddhism is the religion of earnest, undaunted effort. Buddha demands from you faith in your own Self, in your own latent forces. Without this faith, nothing can be achieved. The first words of Buddha, after his Enlightenment, were: “Wide open are the gates of Immortality. Ye that have ears to hear, release your faith”.

BUDDHA, THE APOSTLE OF AHIMSA AND LOVE

Buddha was the greatest benevolent man or humanitarian which the world has ever produced. He is one without a second. Benevolence and humanitarianism are the key-notes of all religious movements of the world; but, the benevolence and humanitarian spirit and work of Buddha stand unrivalled in the religious history of the world.

Buddha abandoned his kingdom and went about begging his bread through the streets of India, and preached for the good of men and animals. He had a heart as wide as the sky or the ocean. He did not want heaven. He did not want money or throne. What an exalted selfless Yogi he was !

Many Rishis and prophets have preached the doctrine of love and Ahimsa, but there has never been, in the entire history of the world’s ethical thought, a greater affirmation of the principle of Ahimsa and love than has been done by Buddha. No one has possessed such a tender, kind and merciful heart as Buddha. Hence, he is enshrined even now in the hearts of millions of people. His heart throbbed severely and melted when he saw a little suffering in an ant or a worm or a dog. He gave up his body as food for a hungry ferocious animal in his previous birth. Several acts of kindness done in several births made him a Buddha in his last birth.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

The gospel of Buddha is simple, and yet wonderfully profound. Buddha analysed all experiences, and the world process as it appears to all of us; with a scientific frame of mind. He found out that everything, is mutable, changing, and impermanent or transitory. There is suffering,

disharmony, discord and discontent everywhere in life, on account of the impermanence or transitoriness of things around. This universal experience of sorrow or *Duhkha* is the starting point in Buddha's thought. Buddha did not preach pessimism. He was wonderfully optimistic. He emphatically asserts that there is a way out of sorrow, and a heaven of eternal bliss, within the reach of every man.

The four cardinal truths or principles which Buddha preached are: that there is suffering in the world; that the cause of suffering is *Tanha* or craving; that the extinction of craving leads to cessation of suffering; and that this extinction of craving can be achieved by the Noble Eightfold Path.

Buddha lays great emphasis on the way of life. He avoids the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, and prescribes the Middle Way. He said: "There is a Middle Way, O recluses, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathagata — a path which opens the eyes and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana."

What is this Middle Way? It is the Noble Eightfold Path which constitutes, so to say, the entire ethical code of Buddha.

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of the practice of right belief or right understanding or right views; right aspiration; right speech; right conduct or right action; right living or right means of livelihood; right exertion; right mindfulness or attentiveness; and right concentration or meditation.

These are the eight steps in the Way of Life presented by Buddha which annihilate suffering of all kinds and lead to the attainment of Nirvana or emancipation. The Noble Eightfold Path destroys lust, anger, greed, malice and other evils, and purifies the heart. Then dawns *Bodhi* or Enlightenment which bestows perfect everlasting peace, eternal bliss and immortality.

The word 'Nirvana' literally means 'going out'. It signifies

a spiritual experience full of peace and bliss, which is characterised by the 'going out' from the heart of the three fires of lust, ill-will and dullness.

Nirvana is not utter annihilation. Nirvana is total extinction of all that is base in us.

Buddha insisted upon the inexorable Law of Cause and Effect. He said to the people that they lived in a world in which causes always produce their natural and necessary effects and that the consequences of their conduct would, therefore, follow them wherever they went. He said that virtue has its own reward and vice its own punishment and that whatever is done inevitably reacts on the character and through the character affects for weal or woe the destiny of the Soul.

The religion of Buddha is a pathway to the Nirvanic beatitude. It is a way, and not a creed. It is a scheme of spiritual development, and not a set of doctrines.

BUDDHA — PREACHER OF PRACTICAL RELIGION

Buddha came to the world to show the path of righteousness, to destroy the path of error, and to break down sorrow. Buddhism is not agnosticism or atheism. Buddhism is not nihilism. Buddha did not deny God. He only said: "Do not bother about questions like 'Is there God?', 'Do I exist?', 'Is the world real or not?'. Do not waste your time and energy in useless discussions. Become a practical religious man. Purify your heart. Control the mind. Lead a virtuous life. You will attain *Nirvana* or emancipation or eternal bliss."

To accuse Buddha as an atheist or agnostic is simply foolish, Buddha found no use in metaphysical wrangling. He declined to enter into metaphysics. Is there God or no God? Is life eternal or non-eternal? These questions were set aside as not requiring an answer for the attainment of *Nirvana*. The immediate great problem

for Buddha was suffering and annihilation of suffering. He asked his followers not to bother about the transcendental questions. He set aside all those things which did not help towards the attainment of the goal. He thought it wise to give his followers a way, and not a creed. He thought that speculation about the nature of the ultimate reality was an unnecessary drag on the path of truth and spiritual attainment. The vital and fundamental thing is not to discuss about the ultimate truth, but to tread the path which takes man out of the world of pain and suffering into the supreme abode of eternal bliss and immortality. The nature of the ultimate truth is beyond the reach of mind and speech. If Buddha refused to define the nature of the Absolute, or if he contented himself with negative definitions, it is only to show that the Absolute or the Ultimate is above all definitions.

CONCLUSION

The present-day world needs very badly the teachings of Lord Buddha. Everywhere we see preparations for the destruction of the human race and its culture. Fear of the atomic bomb is causing restlessness everywhere. Scientists and dictators have neither rest nor peace. There is mistrust amongst the leaders of the nations. Malice, hatred and prejudice have grown to such a large extent that the very structure of human civilisation seems to be crumbling. The one great ambition of every nation is to possess more atomic bombs. Scientists are working day and night in the laboratories to release as much atomic energy as possible to destroy people. What a horrible state of affairs! It is really shocking. The only way by which the world can be saved lies in a return to the great principles of *Ahimsa* and *Maitri* inculcated by Lord Buddha, and Maharshi Patanjali. Hatred can never be cured by hatred. It can only be cured by love. This is a lesson which the world has to learn again and again. Take a solemn vow now to meet hatred with love, and malice with goodwill. This is the best way to pay our homage to the great sage Lord Buddha, the apostle of love and Ahimsa, the saviour of the world, the Avatara of Lord Vishnu.

JAINISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

“Jain” or more properly speaking “Jaina” means a follower of Jina, which is applied to those persons who have conquered the lower nature, passion, hatred, etc. The word ‘Jain’ comes from the word ‘Jina’ which means a conqueror. ‘Jina’ comes from the root ‘Ji’ — ‘to conquer’. It means conquering the passions. It does not mean conquering nations. The passions are considered as enemies of the soul. They taint the natural qualities of the soul, obscure right belief, cause false knowledge and wrong conduct. Lust, anger, pride and greed are considered as the major passions.

The chief point in the Jaina creed is the reverence paid to holy men, who have raised themselves to divine perfection through long discipline. The Jina or the ‘conquering saint’, who has conquered all worldly desires is with Jains what the Buddha or the perfectly enlightened saint is with Buddhas. He is also called Jineswara (chief of the Jinas), Arhat, “the venerable”, Tirthankara or the saint who has made the passage of the world, Sarvajna (omniscient), Bhagavat (holy one). “Tirtha” literally means a ford, a means of crossing over. It metaphorically denotes a spiritual guide or philosophy which enables one to cross over the ocean of recurring births in this world. ‘Kara’ means ‘one who makes’. The word Tirthankara means a ‘Jain Holy Teacher’.

According to the belief of the Jains, only the omniscient are able to give a right code of rules of life. These teachers or Tirthankaras are not creators or rulers of the world. They are pure divine souls, who have attained perfection. They never again take human birth.

Mahavira is not the founder of Jainism. He revived the Jain doctrines. He was more a reformer than the founder of the faith. He was the first active propagator. He was the twenty-fourth Tirthankara. He is claimed to have been omniscient. 'Maha' means 'great' and 'Vira' means 'a hero'. Parasvanath was the twenty-third. The first of these twenty-four was named Rishabha Dev.

The idols which represent the Tirthankaras are like that of Buddha in a meditative posture. Jainism is a representative of Buddhistic ideas. It has much in common with Buddhism. It is a near relative of Buddhism, if not its actual descendant.

The Jain theory is based on reason. It is based on right faith, right knowledge, right conduct, tempered with mercy. Jainism is not a theistic system in the sense of the belief in the existence of a God as the Creator and the Ruler of the world. The highest being in the Jain philosophy is a person and not a Being without attributes like the Brahman of the Vedanta.

JAIN PHILOSOPHY

The Jain philosophy bases its doctrine on the absolute necessity of conquering the lower nature for the realisation of Truth.

The Jains do not accept the authority of the Vedas.

Jainism divides the whole universe into two main divisions viz., sentient beings (*Chetana*, also called Jiva or Soul) and non-sentient things (*Jada*, also called Ajiva or non-soul). Soul is that element which thinks, knows and feels. It is the divine element in the living being. The true nature of the soul is right knowledge, right faith and right conduct. The soul is undergoing evolution and involution, so long as it is subject to transmigration. Whatever is not soul is non-soul (Ajiva).

The combination of the Jiva and the Ajiva causes all diversities in this universe. Their interaction or interplay is the cause of the world-process or evolution. When the soul is stripped of all its Ajiva bondage, it becomes pure and attains its ultimate Mukti.

GOD

Jainism does not regard God as a Creator. God in the sense of an extra cosmic personal Creator has no place in the Jain philosophy. But there is a subtle essence underlying all substances, conscious and unconscious, which becomes the cause of all modifications. This is termed God. The Jain idea of Godhood is the perfected Soul (Siddha), the liberated soul (Mukta). The Jains worship these liberated souls (Tirthankaras) who have destroyed all Karmas and attained salvation, as their God. They accept those enlightened souls only, who have abandoned all worldly connections, who lead the life of true Sadhus, who have controlled all selfish desires, as their spiritual teachers. They accept that only as the true religion, which is promulgated by them.

The Jain Tirthankara is free from faults. He is true God. He is the knower of all things and the revealer of Dharma. He is free from the 18 kinds of blemishes viz., hunger, thirst, senility, disease, birth, death, fear, pride, attachment, aversion, infatuation, worry, conceit, hatred, uneasiness, sweat, sleep and surprise.

The Jain philosophy teaches that each soul is a separate individuality, uncreated and eternal in existence. It has lived from time immemorial in some embodied state. It evolves from the lower to the higher condition through the Law of Karma, or cause and effect. It takes fresh bodies after death so long as the Karmas or forces generated in previous lives have not been fully worked out. Eventually it unfolds its absolute purity by breaking the bonds of Karma and attains perfection, Nirvana or Mukti.

The individuality is not merged into anything. It is not annihilated also. It attains right realisation, right knowledge and right life. The perfected soul is neither masculine, feminine, nor neuter.

Every soul is potentially omniscient. Consciousness is the very nature of the soul. Soul is a pure embodiment of knowledge. The soul has infinite potentialities. It has infinite capacity for removing Karma-bondages.

WORLD

The world is beginningless and endless. There is no extra cosmic creator or ruler of the world. There are six real substances which constitute the world. These six are space, time, matter, souls, Dharmastikaya (fulcrum of motion) and Adharmastikaya (fulcrum of stability, or rest). Space serves as a receptacle for the other substances. It is infinite. Time is real. It is beginningless and endless. Material objects consist of atoms.

DOCTRINE OF KARMA AND REINCARNATION

The only enemy of the soul is the force of its own Karmas (actions). It can destroy the Karma by becoming fully self-conscious. When the bonds of Karma are destroyed, the soul attains Mukti. It cannot be overcome afresh by Karma.

The doctrine of Karma occupies a very prominent place in the Jain philosophy. *Punya* is the effect of virtuous deeds (*Subha Karma*). *Papa* is the effect of evil deeds (*Asubha Karma*). If a man has abundance of good actions, his happiness increases; if he has abundance of evil deeds, his miseries and pain increase. When both the good and evil deeds are eliminated, he attains emancipation or Moksha.

The doctrine of Karma is the companion doctrine of the transmigration of the soul. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall be also reaped." These are but the corollaries of that most

intricate Law of Karma. This solves the problem of the inequality and seeming injustice in the world. A student of the Jain Karma philosophy can trace any effect to a particular Karma. Those who by right faith, right knowledge and right conduct destroy all Karmas, attain perfection. They become divine and are called *Jinas*. Those *Jinas* who, in every age, preach the law and establish the order, are called Tirthankaras.

The Jains believe in reincarnation. The doctrine of reincarnation alone can explain the inequality seen in the world. Why is one man born rich and the other poor? Why is one man healthy and strong, and another man weak and unhealthy? Why one man lives for 30 years, and another for 85 years? Why one man is a king and another a labourer in the field? What is the cause of this apparent injustice? Karma. Good Karmas give good birth. Evil Karmas give rise to low births. The doctrine of reincarnation is another grand doctrine of the Jain philosophy. It is the companion doctrine of Doctrine of Karma.

TRIPLE JEWELS

Right faith, right knowledge and right conduct constitute the path to Nirvana. Wrong beliefs, wrong knowledge and wrong conduct prolong the bondage of the souls. The belief that the Jaina Tirthankaras are the true Gods, the Jaina Sastras the true scriptures and the Jaina saints the true Preceptors is called the *Right faith*.

Right knowledge: Right knowledge reveals the nature of things as it is and with certainty.

Right conduct (Jain ethics): That noble soul who has right knowledge on account of right faith begins to practise the rules of right conduct, to attain the state of desirelessness by eradicating likes and dislikes, which destroy the five kinds of sin viz. *Himsa* (injury), falsehood, theft, unchastity and attachment to mundane objects.

The universal principles of Jainism are *Ahimsa* (non-injury), *Satyam* (truthfulness), *Asteya* (non-stealing), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy) and *Aparigraha* (non-covetousness). This corresponds to the *Yama* of Raja Yoga of Patanjali Maharshi. Jainism preaches universal brotherhood, equality of all beings. It enjoins on all its followers the practice of the greatest self-control.

The five *Mahavratas* or great Commandments for Jain ascetics are: — not to kill, i.e., to protect all life; not to lie; not to take that which is not given; to abstain from sexual intercourse; to renounce all interest in worldly things, particularly to call nothing one's own.

The Jain doctrines are summed up in the maxim '*Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah*'. Non-injury to living beings is the highest religion. Ahimsa is the fundamental tenet of Jainism. Jainism always tends to protect and advance the interests of all kind of living beings.

One should not kill, tell lies, steal, be unchaste or over-greedy for possession of property. This constitutes Jain ethics. The Jains are vegetarians.

According to the Jain philosophy, all evils are due to *Raga* and *Dvesha* (attachment and hatred). Raja Yoga philosophy of Patanjali Maharshi, the Nyaya philosophy of Gautama and Vedanta also say the same thing. Attachment produces *Moha* or infatuation. *Moha* causes entanglement. Separation from the object causes pain and suffering. Through *Dvesha* man injures others. Attachment also is as much an evil as hatred. Both are causes of bondage. Both taint the mind.

MOKSHA

Moksha is the total elimination of Karma from the Jiva. The Jiva gets freedom as soon as it attains this stage. The liberated state is known as Mukti. The Jiva attains perfect, unlimited, eternal

happiness, untouched by cares and worries. Moksha implies freedom from matter. The liberated soul goes to the abode Siddhakshetra, which is at the top of this world.

The individual by his own efforts liberates all his latent qualities, which were obscured by foreign elements (Karmas). This state of purity or perfection is attained only in the human life through the triple jewels, viz. right faith, right knowledge and right conduct.

The soul becomes pure by the removal of matter. In this condition there are no pain, misery, disease, old age or death, fatigue, discomfort. It is a condition of immortality, infinite knowledge, eternal uninterrupted bliss.

SIKHISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Sikhism was founded in the fifteenth century by Sri Guru Nanak Dev, the first of Gurus born in Talwandi (now Nankana Sahib) in Seikhpura in the district of Lahore (in Pakistan). He made no attempt to build up a new religion. He tried to have a unifying religion to embrace both Hindus and Mohammedans. He insisted on the worship of one God, the Creator and the Supreme Ruler, who is all and apart from Whom any thought of individual existence is only *Maya*.

Guru Nanak tried his level best to join the Hindus and the Musalmans in one league of love to God and service to man. The cardinal doctrines of Sikhism are the unity or oneness of God and the brotherhood of man.

Love to God and the teacher is the very basis and the very root of Sikhism. In its philosophy it is Hindu. It is reformatory in its nature, Sikhism is a movement essentially of Bhakti. Guru Nanak taught that one can obtain his emancipation through the name of Hari. Guru Gobind gave to the Sikhs their great military organisation. He was a great military organiser.

The word 'Sikh' simply means a disciple. It is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Shishya' or disciple. Sikhism enjoins that obedience to the Guru brings release from future birth, and the attainment of eternal bliss and immortality.

A Sikh is admitted to the privilege of the Community only when he received the *Pahul* (baptism). When he is baptised, he adopts the five *Kakas* — the 'Kes' (uncut hair), the 'Kachh' (short drawers), the 'Kara' (iron bangle), the 'Kirpan' (steel dagger) and the 'Kangha' (small comb worn in the hair).

The Sikhs are divided into many sub-sects viz. Udasis, Nirmalas and the Akalis. The Udasis are an ascetic order of the Nanakshahi Sikhs. The Nirmalas are celibates. They are also an ascetic order of the Nanakshahis. The Akalis are the most fanatical of all the Sikh sects. They wear a distinctive dress of blue and a black turban.

GRANTH SAHIB

(Holy Scripture of Sikhs)

Guru Nanak invented Gurumukhi language, which is the corrupt form of Hindi. It contains 53 alphabets. The whole Granth Sahib is in Gurumukhi language.

The sacred scriptures or Holy Granths are two. One was compiled by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev. The other is a collection of miscellaneous hymns of the tenth Guru, Guru Govind Singh and of translations of Sanskrit books made by various others under the orders of Guru Govind Singh. A part of the Granth contains an abstract of the Ramayana, and the Srimad Bhagavata.

The Holy Granth, popularly known as the Adi Granth, contains the hymns of the first five Gurus, with a few selections from the hymns of different contemporary saints. These were all collected, arranged and formed into a volume called "Guru Granth Sahib" by the fifth Guru.

The teaching of Guru Nanak are contained in the first book of the Adi-Granth. Nanak was succeeded by Angad, Amardas, Ram Das, Arjun, Har Gobind, Har Rai, Har Kishan, Tej Bahadur and Govind Singh, in turn. These are the ten Gurus or Preceptors of the Sikhs.

Amritsar in Punjab is the sacred city of the Sikhs, as Benares is to the Hindus. There is the famous Golden Temple in Amritsar, where the Adi Granth Sahib is kept and worshipped. This is the biggest and the most important Gurudwara of the Sikhs and has in

its front the famous and most beautiful tank called the “Nectar Tank” or “Amrit Saras” from which the city derives its name. It is regarded with great reverence and devotion and is said to possess miraculous properties. All Sikhs believe that anyone who bathes in it with devotion is at once healed of all afflictions, — physical, mental and moral.

MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SIKHISM

The following are the main principles on which Sikhism is based:

- i) Belief in the One true God.
- ii) Implicit surrender of one’s will to God.
- iii) The practice of righteousness and rectitude.
- iv) Fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood of man.
- v) No worship, but of the Lord God.
- vi) To work in good faith as a duty imposed by God, abandoning fear for a bad result and giving up hope of reward for a good result.

TEACHINGS OF GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak is a great prophet of Peace. Guru Nanak’s teaching breathes the purest spirit of devotion. He takes the view of the Upanishads that there is one Brahman. He declares that the creation is only *Maya*, and all things come into being by *Maya*, the power of the Lord. He says that the Jiva or the individual soul is the same in essence as the Supreme. He admits the doctrines of Karma and incarnation. He says that it is difficult to get a human birth and salvation can be attained in human birth only. Devotion to God is the essence of all teachings. Without Bhakti all search is vain and fruitless.

JAPJI (Five Stages)

Japji is the great morning prayer of the Sikhs. It is the most sacred collection of the hymns of Guru Nanak. It is the foundation-

stone on which the Sikh Scripture, the Holy Guru Granth is built. The hymns were arranged in their present form by the fifth Guru, Sri Guru Arjun Deva. It contains the *Mula-Mantra*, 38 *Pauris* or steps or rungs of the ladder and a Sloka which forms the epilogue or conclusion. The Granth Sahib, the Scripture of the Sikhs, begins with Japji. The rest of the Granth Sahib is an exposition of the philosophical doctrines and teachings contained in the Japji. It shows the way for reaching God. *Sohila* is repeated at bed time.

In the Japji Guru Nanak has given a lucid, laconic and beautiful description of the stages through which the individual soul must pass, in order to attain eternal peace. There are five stages or Khandas viz., (1) Dharam Khand, (2) Gian Khand, (3) Sharan Khand, (4) Karam Khand and (5) Such Khand.

The first stage is Dharam Khand, This is the realm of Duty or Action. Everyone should perform his duties well. Everyone will be judged according to his deeds. His own deeds alone shall avail after his life on this earth.

The second stage is Gian Khand. This is the realm of Knowledge. Man’s resolve to do his duty is strengthened now by the knowledge that it is by performing their duty that great souls like Rama and Krishna have attained the abode of everlasting peace.

The soul passes from the Gian Khand to Sharan Khand. This is the Realm of Ecstasy. In this region Dharma becomes natural and spontaneous. It becomes part and parcel of one’s nature. It becomes an ingrained habit. There is holy rapture in this realm. There is nothing else but Beauty.

From Sharan Khand the soul passes to Karam Khand. This is the Realm of Power. He acquires power and spiritual strength on account of the character built in the previous three stages. He becomes invincible. His beauty is ineffable. Fear of death vanishes. He is freed from the round of births and deaths. There are God-

intoxicated saints here who are in a state of supreme Bliss.

Then he passes on to the final realm, Such Khand, the Abode of Truth, which is near Karam Khand. Here reigns the Formless One. Here the aspirant becomes one with the Supreme Lord. He has attained Godhood. His will has merged in the Cosmic Will or the Divine Will.

The Mulamantra, or sacred prayer of Sikhs, affirms that there is but one God. His Name is true. He is the Creator. He is free from fear and enmity. He is beyond time. He is immortal, unborn, formless and self-existent. He can be realised by the Grace of the Guru. He existed before the beginning of the world. He existed before the beginning of the *Yugas*. He exists now, and says Nanak — He shall exist for ever.

This contains the essence of the Upanishads or Vedanta of the Hindus.

May the blessings of Sri Guru Nanak, the great Prophet of peace, be upon you all!

JUDAISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Judaism constitutes the religious doctrines and rites of the Jews as enjoined in the laws of Moses.

Judaism is based on Zoroastrianism and it has given rise to two great religions of the world, i.e., Christianity and Mohammedanism. The Mohammedans admit that their religion is founded on Judaism. The Koran also is very clear on this point.

Zoroastrian conception of Ahura Mazda as the Supreme Being is perfectly identical with the idea of Elohim (God) or Jehovah which we find in the books of Old Testament.

Abraham, the Prophet, was the first man who has revealed God to all humanity. He is the Founder of the Hebrew race. Abraham had two sons, — one from Sarah and one from Hagar, the Egyptian woman, — Isaac and Ismael, who are the fathers of Jews and Mohammedans, respectively. Isaac had two sons, viz., Essau and Jacob, and their descendents are the Christians and Jews, respectively. Hebrew is one of the descendents of Jacob; an Israelite, a Jew.

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

The old Testament contains the sacred writings of the ancient Jewish race. The newer portion is known as the New Testament which was begun after the coming of Jesus Christ, more than nineteen hundred years ago.

Long before Jesus came to this world, the Jews wrote and studied their sacred books. These were written in their Hebrew tongue. The old Hebrew books were translated into Greek about two hundred years before the Christian era.

The books of the Jews were arranged into three main

divisions. The first was called “The Law”. It dealt with the laws of the world. These books are now the first part of the Bible, viz., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The second class was that of the Prophets. It included Joshua, Isaiah and Jeremiah. Psalms and Proverbs constituted third class. The Old Testament contains 39 books.

JEWISH SECTS

The Law was set forth as a complete system by which men should live. By the Law was understood in a special sense the Pentateuch. Every word of Pentateuch was considered as inspired and an immediate revelation to Moses.

(a) There was a need for explanation of the Law. The *Scribes* were the interpreters of the Law. They explained and applied the rules of the Torah to special cases. The Scribes were recognised as the legislators and the judges of Israel. Their decisions had the force of Law. The first Scribes were priests.

(b) The fraternity of the *Pharisees* were the popular or nationalist party. They believed in the doctrine of immortality, resurrection of the body, the existence of angels and spirits. As religious teachers, they upheld the authority of oral tradition as of equal validity with the written law. They inclined to fatalism in the question of the freedom of the will. The Zealots represented one extreme side of the Pharisaic movement.

(c) *Sadducus* were aristocratic priests. They held to the letter of the Mosaic revelation. They denied the authority of the oral tradition as interpreted by the Pharisees. They taught complete freedom of the will in moral action. They had no belief in angels or spirits. They did not accept the doctrine of immortality as a deduction from the Pentateuch.

(d) The *Essenes* followed celibacy, isolation, silence, ceremonial ablutions and abstinence from animal food. They

practised asceticism. They did worship of the sun and the angels. They believed in the dualistic theory of good and evil and the symbolism of light. They abstained from sacrifices and temple worship.

TORAH

The Prophets of Israel were the great religious leaders who brought great progress in Hebraic thought. Rabbis also were authoritative teachers. They worked very hard in the field of Torah. They produced the massive Talmudic literature. They were the representatives of Pharisaism. Talmud is indispensable for a knowledge of Hebraic thought.

This is the key word in the life and literature of the Hebrews. Torah denotes the divine revelation to Israel on Mount Sinai as embodied in the five Books of Moses. The Torah (Law) as given to Moses consists of 613 commandments which are the essence of the divine and terrestrial mysteries. Torah indicates a way of life rather than a form of belief.

Moses received the Torah (Law, direction, instruction) on Sinai and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Synagogue, a synod of zealous men created by Ezra, the Scribe in the fifth century B.C. The function of the synagogue was to study and teach Torah. The synagogue was a church, a school and a court of justice. It was a house of instruction. It was the chief means by which the teaching and influence of the Scribes were extended and by which the enactments of the Law were interpreted and enforced.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

God gave His ten commandments to Moses on the Mount Sinai. The Lord called unto him out of the mountain and said: “Thus shall thou say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel”.

(i) I am the Lord Thy God, which have brought thee out of

the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

(ii) Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

(iii) Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

(iv) Remember the sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day and hallowed it.

(v) Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee:

(vi) Thou shalt not kill.

(vii) Thou shalt not commit adultery.

(viii) Thou shalt not steal.

(ix) Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

(x) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's.

MOSAIC COSMOGONY

This is the Mosaic account of Cosmogony. On the first day heaven and earth were created; on the second, firmament and waters; on the third, dry land, grass, the birds and fruit trees; on the

fourth, lights, the sun, the moon, the stars; on the fifth, moving creatures, winged fowls, great whales; on the sixth, living creatures, cattle, creepers, beasts, man. In Genesis, the Creation ends with the creation of man.

God created Adam on the sixth day and gave him the charge of the animals. Adam had three children, viz., Cain, Abel and Sheth. Cain killed Abel. The descendents of Cain were drowned in the flood. The descendents of Sheth are all the humanity of the world.

TENETS OF JUDAISM

The Jews believe in resurrection, in angels, and in the existence of two powers, viz., God and the Devil or Satan. The unity of God is the cardinal principle of the religion of the Hebrews. God is bodiless. This is also a doctrine of great importance. God is ever pure and holy. This is third important attribute of God. He is the Creator of the entire world. He is the Father of all His creatures. He is just and merciful. He is without iniquity.

The Jewish saints have spoken much about the efficacy and power of repentance. Man's fate depends in the last resort upon repentance and prayer, particularly prayer with tears, because there is no gate which tears cannot penetrate. The end and aim of all wisdom is repentance. Happy is the man who repents. The gates of repentance never close. Repentance prolongs a man's life. The tears of true repentance are not shed in vain. Even the most righteous shall not attain to so high a place in heaven as the truly repentant. Even an hour spent in repentance with a contrite heart in this world is preferable to a whole life in the world to come. Repent one day sincerely with a contrite heart before you die. After repentance you should not repeat the same wicked act.

The unity of God, the Incorporeality of God and the Holiness of God are the main features of Judaism.

CHRISTIANITY

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Christianity derives its name from Christ. Christianity speaks of a Personal God. There is not much deep philosophy or Yoga Sadhana in Christianity. There is reason for this. Jesus had to deal with the illiterate fishermen of Galilee. He gave them only moral precepts and showed them the way of righteous living.

Christianity is based chiefly on Judaism and partly on Buddhism. The doctrines of the Christian religion are all taken from Judaism. Jesus never professed to abolish Judaism and to set up a new religion of his own.

Christian faith sprung from the wisdom of India overspread the old trunk of Judaism. Buddhism prevailed in Palestine when Christ was born. Christ himself came in contact with it through John the Baptist. There is a striking resemblance between Buddhism and Christianity in their precepts, in their forms and ceremonies, in the architectural style of their temples, and even in the accounts of the lives of their founders.

The dogmas or metaphysical doctrines of Christianity are the same as those of Judaism but its moral precepts are much higher and nobler than those of the Jewish prophets. Christianity owes to Buddhism that higher morality which distinguishes it from Judaism. The moral precepts and teachings of Buddhism have much in common with those of Christianity. Christ himself taught no dogmas.

The teaching of Jesus which is chiefly ethical is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord's Prayer and certain parables known as the parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Sheep and the Goats.

LORD JESUS

Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King. He was the son of a carpenter of Nazareth, a large village in Galilee, the northern Province of Palestine.

Jesus was a Palestine Jew of the first century. He lived with Joseph and Mary and a large family of brothers or half-brothers in the house of the carpenter of Nazareth. He was baptised by John the Baptist on the banks of the river Jordan. Now he saw a vision of God's spirit descending like a dove on him. He heard a voice say unto him: "Thou art my beloved son. I am well pleased with thee." John the Baptist was the Preceptor of Jesus.

Jesus was an incarnation of the Hebrew God Jehovah. Jesus is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic name pronounced Yeshua, according to Hebrew Scholars. It was altered into Jesus in English. He was also called Messiah, the anointed one, or the Saviour of the World.

Between his 18th and 32nd years of age, Jesus spent his life in India and lived like a Hindu or Buddhist monk. He had burning Vairagya (dispassion) and spirit of renunciation. In India he assimilated Hindu ideals and principles.

THE CROSS

Lord Jesus totally surrendered himself at the lotus feet of the Lord. He had intense faith in Him. It was the faith that sustained him throughout his life. The Cross of Jesus will remain for ever the supreme example of love and suffering without returning evil for evil. The Cross symbolises a great principle of life. In the Christian theology the Cross has a wonderful halo. It is not a common cross of wood. The Cross of Jesus is a classic instance of love resisting evil and overcoming it. When Lord Jesus was put to the Cross, he said: "My Lord! They do not know what they are doing. Please forgive them." What a large heart and wonderful power of endurance Jesus had!

He who has control over the flesh, who has crucified the flesh, who has subdued the life-passions, who has self-control, who has mortified the lower nature, can bear the Cross.

JESUS' QUALITIES

Jesus was holy. He was God-man, the incarnation of God. Jesus called himself the Son of God.

In Jesus we see perfect holiness, goodness, kindness, mercy, gentleness and justice. He said: "I am the Truth, the Way and the Life." He is the embodiment of all that is best, sublimest and most beautiful. He is the most perfect type and ideal of humanity. He is the embodiment of all his teachings. He is a philosopher, prophet, teacher, reformer. He always practised what he taught.

Jesus was truthful. His thoughts were very pure. There was no hypocrisy or deception in his thoughts. He risked his own life in uttering the truth. The spirit of Jesus is the spirit of Truth. He is called the Sun of Righteousness. He went about doing good.

The words of Jesus still elevate people. They still live as a fountain of inspiration.

Christ took the sins of humanity on himself, suffered for their sins and made them free. This is the theory of Atonement of Christ.

HIS PHILOSOPHY AND TEACHINGS

Nearly two thousand years have passed since Lord Jesus, the Prophet of Palestine taught the way, the truth and the life to mankind. The words of Jesus were not collected till some generations after they were uttered. Christianity was essentially a radiant way of life, a way of happy and victorious living in this world.

There is no record of the life of Jesus until he was fully grown up. He astonished people by his insight when discussing religion with the religious leaders of his day. For three years he

explained his claim as the "Only Son of God" and taught people about the nature of his "Father" God, and the true paths of human life in the shape of 'Sermon on the Mount', etc. Jesus Christ has been called "The Great Exemplar". He explained the real nature of God, man and the world he lived in. He taught people to change their way of looking at things. He told them that if they would change their outlook on life from its materialistic to its spiritualistic aspect, they would realise that the world they were living in was God's Kingdom.

He has left no written records of his important teachings. He delivered all his teachings orally. Neither he nor his followers ever wrote down even a single word which was spoken by him, in his life-time.

His words have been misunderstood, wrongly annotated, mutilated, deformed and transformed and yet they have survived almost two thousand years as they were very powerful and came from the heart of a realised Yogi.

Here is the gist of Jesus's teachings: God is a Spirit. He is Omnipresent. He loves His creatures with infinite love. He is the Father of all. God is immanent in the world. He is transcendental also. He sent His son Jesus Christ unto the world to show them the way to attain immortality.

The theological doctrine of Jesus is belief in the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. In Godhead there are three Persons, viz., Father, Son and the Holy Ghost or Spirit. This is the Trinity of Christianity.

All men are brothers, because they are all members of the family of God. If the teaching of Christ is carried out there will be no war.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament contains 27 books. The first four books are Gospels which describe the life of Christ on this earth. The next

book tells us of the Acts of the Apostles, particularly of the important Apostle Paul. The twenty-one shorter books give out the ideas underlying the Christian faith of the early Christians. The last book is the book of Revelations. It gives a description of the series of visions, viz., the lamb of God and the heavenly city. The author is John the favourite Apostle of Jesus. All these books were written in Greek, which was the language of educated men at the beginning of the Christian era.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Here is his “Sermon on the Mount”:

Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the sons of God.

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

JESUS AND THE MODERN MAN

True, Lord Jesus bled on the Cross for the redemption of his people. Today, from his eternal seat in the Kingdom of God, his divine compassionate heart bleeds ever more profusely. For, the people of his time were ignorant of the Law and they erred; but the

people of the modern world have the resplendent light of Lord Jesus’ life and teachings illumining the path of darkness, ignorance, sin, selfishness, sensuousness and misery. If his merciful heart bled for the ignorant sinners, how much more would it not bleed for the sins of those who err, ignoring His light !

Is this the way in which you would like humanity to show its gratitude to the Saviour? No, a thousand times no. It is never too late to mend. Study the Gospels again. Meditate on the resplendent, spiritually glowing, divine form of Lord Jesus. How sweet, how compassionate, how gentle and loving he was! And yet, he showed no leniency towards himself. He turned resolutely away from Satan—not that he could ever be tempted, but to set an example before us.

Trials and temptations come but to be overcome by the brave. Tests and trying situations come to strengthen your mind and to purify your heart. They are, as it were, the wise men that discover the Jesus in you. To succumb to these trials is weakness. To fast, to pray, to discriminate and to overcome these obstacles with the help of the grace of the Lord is spiritual heroism. When the victory is achieved, to feel, to realise and to proclaim that it was the Lord’s grace that enabled you to attain victory is real meekness. Meekness is virtue; weakness is sin. Learn this great lesson from the life of Lord Jesus.

Study the Sermon on the Mount again and again. Meditate upon it. Choose the Lord’s instructions one after the other, month after month, and endeavour diligently to put them into practice. Thus will you grow into a worthy child of Lord Jesus. Thus will you incarnate Lord Jesus in your own heart. There are many today who truly and sincerely follow the teachings of the Saviour. In their hearts has Jesus incarnated, to guide you, to lead you to the Kingdom of God, where he has his supreme seat. May you all be living embodiments of the Sermon on the Mount! May you realise the Kingdom of God within you here and now!

ISLAM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Islam is the name given by Mohamed, the Prophet of Arabia, to the religion which he founded. Islam is an Arabic word, which means peace. It means submission to the will of God. It means surrender, acceptance of the revelation and commands of God. The personal name of God is Allah. The aim of Mohamed's preaching was the establishment of the religion of one God, Allah. Islam is a religion of universal brotherhood like Theosophy. Firm, unswerving belief in one God is the essence of true religion according to Islamic faith. It makes no distinction between caste and caste, creed and creed.

"There is no God but Allah and Mohamed is the Messenger of Allah." This is the fundamental teaching of the Prophet of Islam. This is the cardinal tenet or doctrine of Islam. The religion of Islam is expressed shortly in this short formula. Mohamed preached the unity of God. He taught the love of God, respect for parents and the aged, reverence to women and a noble standard of life. Alms-giving or charity was a religious duty. He said: "Every good act is charity. Your smiling in your brother's face is charity. Putting a wanderer in the right path is charity."

The religion of Mohamed is based chiefly on Judaism and partly on Zoroastrianism. The Prophet has improved upon the Jewish religion in certain respects. He was born in the sixth century.

The religion taught by the Prophet of Arabia is plain, simple and direct. The beauty of this religion is marred by the un-Islamic behaviour of some of the followers of Islam. It is clearly said in Koran, "No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother

that which he desires for himself. God will not be affectionate to that man who is not affectionate to God's creatures. Assist any person oppressed whether he is Muslim or non-Muslim. Love your fellow-being first."

Islam recognises brotherhood of man. A Muslim is expected to treat a non-Muslim as a brother and with as much generosity and friendliness as possible. Islam is a religion of service. The service of man and the good of humanity constitute the service and worship of God.

Prophet Mohamed taught to the people more of ethics than deep philosophy, as they had no proper culture.

A Muslim believes in God, His Angels, His books and His messengers, the Last day, the Resurrection from the dead, Predestination by God, good and evil, the Judgment, the Balance, Paradise and Hell fire, the divine inspiration of Mohamed, the origin of the Koran as divine inspiration, the future state. He is ready to enter into the religious war (Jihad) when so ordered by the divine as a religious duty.

The first principle of Islam is "God has sent messengers to mankind throughout the ages to teach them that all messengers and all holy books are true," thereby emphasising the universality of faith.

TEACHINGS

The five cardinal tenets of Islam are (1) Oneness of God and the revelation of God's will to man through a series of Prophets, the last of the series being Mohamed, (2) Prayer (Salat), (3) Fasting, (4) Alms-giving or charity (Zakat) and (5) Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca). These are the five pillars of Islam.

The sacred book of the Muslims is the Koran. This book deals with many different subjects, doctrines, morals, legal enactments, matters of State, manners and matters of private import. They have been collected into Surahs or chapters. To the Muslim it

is the word of God eternal and uncreated conveyed to the Prophet in Arabic by the angel Gabriel. The Holy Koran is divided into 114 chapters. The word 'Surah' literally means eminence or high degree. The total number of verses is 6,247. The Koran was revealed bit by bit during a period of 23 years. Of the twenty three years over which the revelation of the whole book is spread, thirteen years were passed by Mohamed at Mecca and ten years at Medina.

Islam is a religion of peace. It is submission to the will of God. A true Mussalman must be tolerant. Islam teaches that every religion is true. Islam teaches that God has sent Prophets and religious teachers to mankind to bring them to the path of goodness, to teach them the noble things of life, to be kind, to be noble, to be merciful, to be good and to be just. Islam teaches to regard not only human beings with kindness and tolerance, but also to treat animals with kindness.

Koran says: "Any man may attain liberation by his faith and good actions. The flesh and blood of the animals that are sacrificed shall never reach God, but your purity shall reach God. The flesh and blood of the animals you kill, shall not bring salvation for you. Kill this ego. Serve the suffering humanity. Sacrifice your money, time and energy in the service of the poor, the oppressed. This will give you salvation or freedom."

In Koran the brotherhood of man and the equality of woman with man socially, economically and spiritually are emphasised. Man is a member of a great fraternity. Woman is the counterpart of man.

Selflessness and service are the ideals which a Muslim is enjoined to follow. The essence of Islam is the service of the suffering humanity. The sacred Koran says: "Woe to those who pray, who are unmindful of their prayers, who make a show and refuse help to the needy."

The Prophet of Islam also was a great lover of the doctrine of *Ahimsa*. Injuring people in any way or destroying any living creature is reprehensible. He taught that men would be specially

judged on the day of judgment with regard to their cruel treatment of dumb creatures.

Prophet has enjoined on his followers full and broad toleration of the views and beliefs of people other than their own. Koran says: "Let there be no compulsion in religion."

There is no asceticism in Islam. The rigorous austere practices which cause torture to human body are strictly prohibited. What is wanted is a contrite heart, sincere repentance and serious continuous effort to avoid evil and practise virtue.

The great Muslim fast is that of Ramzan. It is a fast for one month. Eating and drinking are forbidden during the day, but are allowed at night.

Jihad is exerting oneself for the cause of religion. It is not taking part in war against unbelievers. Islam strictly prohibits application of force for its observance. There is no compulsion in religion.

Islam teaches that the followers of it should acquire the manifold attributes of Allah. No one can be a Muslim and none can attain Allah without acknowledging the essential truths of all religions.

There is no such thing in Islam that a Muslim should fight in order that religion should live. Islam forbids fighting. Islam says: "You shall not take up arms except in the cause of self-defence." In every sentence of the Koran those who are tyrants have been told: "If you tyrannise over people, if you are cruel to them, you shall be punished."

The Muslims believe in the immortality of the Soul. There will be a day of resurrection when the dead will rise to receive the rewards and punishment of their deeds, in life in accordance with their merits and demerits.

CONCLUSION

The Prophet of Islam taught of the great orders of Angels who carry out God's Will; four Archangels — Michael, the Angel who protects; Gabriel, the Angel who bears God's messages; Azrael,

the Angel of death and Israfil, the Angel of the last trumpet.

At a time when Europe was covered in ignorance and darkness, the early Musalmans kept alive the burning torch of Science and learning. They were thinkers, philosophers and seekers of knowledge. From the eighth century till the fourteenth of our era, the children of Islam were the torch-bearers in the West. Universities were established in Cairo, Baghdad, in Cordova in Spain. Christian Europe learnt its earliest lessons in science, in astronomy, in chemistry, in mathematics from the Musalmans.

There have been in the history of Islam many women who have contributed enormously not only to literature, but also to science. Read the history of the Arabs in Spain and Baghdad. You will be amazed to read therein that women have sat as High Court Judges, have written books and poems, have been scientists and mathematicians, have run schools and hospitals and had under their care thousands of males of every age. They had no Purdah system. The Purdah system in India is of foreign growth. It had its origin in Greece. From Greece it went to Iran and from Iran it was brought by the early Musalman invaders into India.

Such was the splendid development of the Religion which the Prophet of Arabia founded. Its philosophical side too was very noble. It taught that all is from God, that there is no beauty in the world that is not His beauty, that there is no love in the heart of man that is not a breath of His love.

SUFISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Sufism is liberal Islam, with a colouring of Vedanta. Sufism is Islamic in origin. Sufism is the religion of love with Madhurya *Bhava*, with the concepts of the lover and the Beloved.

Sufism is not considered as an integral part of orthodox Islam. Other scholars have traced an Indian origin of the movement. Indian mysticism and Christian mysticism have affected the later developments of Sufism. Indian Sufism is a blend of Persian Sufism and Hindu mysticism.

SUFISTIC SAINTS

Lal Shahbaz, Mansoor, Shams Tabriez, Sachal, Rohal, Dalpat, Shah Inayet, Shah Latif, Bulleh Shah, Hafiz, Rumi and Jami were all Sufistic mystics.

The Sufistic saints are as liberal and catholic as the Vedantic Sannyasins. They are mystic saints. They are devotional. Their utterances or sayings have a wonderful directness, freshness, spontaneous loveliness and charm.

The Sufi mystic sees the Lord in all. He experiences cosmic vision. He beholds his Beloved everywhere and in all objects. He has no sense of possession. He is free from egoism, lust, greed, anger and pride. He is perfectly passionless and enjoys perfect peace and poise. His state is beyond description. He is like the Jivanmukta, or liberated sage. He calls the heart as the palace of the Beloved. He does not care for dogmas or doctrines, creeds or sects. He has attained *Para Bhakti* or supreme devotion.

DOCTRINES

Asceticism is an essential feature of Sufism. The Sufi consecrates all his acts, — physical, mental and spiritual, — to the will of God. Unity of God, brotherhood of man and self-surrender to the Lord are the most vital doctrines of Sufism.

In Sufism God has form. The Sufis recognise His formless aspect too.

Tasawwuf (Sufism) combines ecstasy and service of man. A Sufi wants to remain in the world and serve humanity, but to be above worldliness.

The Sufi language of ecstasy describes the divine experience in a variety of ways such as sweetness, intoxication, perfume, sleep and death. Wine is a symbol of divine intoxication.

In Sufism, Beauty leads to Love and Love to Bliss. All duality melts. The Lover and the Beloved become one. The Sufi strives to attain Absolute Beauty, Absolute Love and Absolute Bliss.

For a Sufi, music is a means to ecstasy. Music plays a very important part in Sufi religious exercise. Sufis worship beauty.

‘Nasut’ means the finite human qualities. ‘Lahut’ means the infinite qualities of God. Survival of individuality is ‘baqa.’ ‘Fana’ means complete annihilation of the lower self or the mystical realisation of union with God. It means dying alive or the sublimation of the ego by annihilating it.

SADHANA

Concentration, meditation, obedience to a Guru (Pir), poverty, discipline, fasts, penances, Japa or recitation of the sacred word (Zikr), the use of rosary, rhythmic and controlled breathing, prayer, universal love, non-injury, detachment, introspection, dispassion, purity of heart and self-control are the means to attain God or the Beloved through divine grace.

The Sufi aspirant looks in a mirror and concentrates on the

Trikute or the space between the two eye-brows in his own reflection in the mirror.

It is very difficult to practise the *Bhava*, of the lover and the Beloved. This sort of Sufistic Sadhana proves dangerous in the case of unregenerate, passionate practitioners and leads to corruption. They mistake the intoxication caused by the drink of wine for Divine Intoxication and indulge themselves in drinking and sensuality. The aspirant should remain under the strict guidance of a Guru during his Sadhana period.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Prayer carries us half-way to Allah; fasting takes us to the door of His palace; charity gains us admission.

He needs no other rosary whose thread of life is strung with beads of love, service, charity and renunciation. .

Righteousness is not that you turn your faces towards the east or the west, but a righteous man is one who believes in God, the last day, the angels, the Book and the prophets, who does charity to the poor, who is steadfast in prayer.

Happy are the believers, who humble themselves in prayer and who keep aloof from vain words, who do charitable acts, and who restrain their appetites.

Your God is one God, there is no God but He, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Do good, because God loveth those who do good.

ZOROASTRIANISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism are world religions but Zoroastrianism is just a national religion now though it was a world religion in days of yore. It is the religion of the Parsees. The correct name for the religion established by Zoroaster is Mazdayasnism which means the worship of Mazda or the Lord.

Mazdayasnism was first revealed by Homa to King Jamshid. Afterwards it was revealed to King Fiedoon. Then it was revealed to Thritha. Lastly it was revealed to Zoroaster.

After the death of Zoroaster his son-in-law Jamaspa became his successor. Jamaspa wrote down the teachings of Zoroaster which are known as Zend Avesta, the scriptures of the Zoroastrians. Frashaoshtra, father-in-law of Zoroaster, was the first apostle of this faith. He expounded the tenets of this religion. Zoroastrianism became the state religion of Persia.

After the time of Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism underwent many changes at the hands of the priests who were called Magi. The priests re-introduced ritualism and the worship of the old nature-deities in a new garb by making them archangels of Ahura Mazda.

Persia is now a Mohammedan country. A few Zoroastrians are found there. They were persecuted and driven out of Persia. They took refuge in India. They are called the Parsees. They have become a self-contained community in India.

Zoroaster was not a philosopher or a metaphysician. He was only a Prophet who had the divine revelation.

Zoroastrianism is not a system of philosophy. It is a revealed religion of faith and devotion. During the days of Zoroaster there was an urgent need for ethics and virtuous life. The

need for philosophy did not arise. At all times the need to lead a virtuous, divine life is far more imperative for the vast majority than the need to understand the various philosophical problems. If one leads the divine life according to the instructions of sages and scriptures, he will find a solution for all the philosophical problems from within through the voice of the Indweller.

Originally there was a common religion among the Aryans in Central Asia. There is similarity between the Vedic and Zend languages. Even the versification of the Zend Avesta is closely related to that of the Vedas. There is identity of divine names in the Zend Avesta and the Vedas.

The principal truths taught by Zoroaster were based on and derived from the Vedas. Zoroastrianism is based on the Vedic religion. The doctrines and ceremonials of the Zoroastrians have a mostly remarkable similarity to those of the Vedas.

ZOROASTRIAN SCRIPTURES

The Yasna and the Visparad are the Vedas of Zoroastrianism. The first part of Yasna consists of Gathas or hymns which came from the mouth of the prophet. The Gathas are five in number. The Gathas are written in metres which correspond to the metres of the Sama Veda. The second part of Yasna contains prayers addressed to the Supreme Lord and other deities who form the spiritual hierarchy.

Visparad is a collection of invocations or litanies which are recited before other prayers and scriptures. The twenty-one Nasks deal with all kinds of Sciences, viz., medicine, astronomy, agriculture, botany, etc. They correspond to the Vedangas of Hinduism. Then there is the Khordah Avesta or little Avesta which contains Yashts (invocations) and prayers for the use of lay persons. The modern Parsees recite these prayers daily.

Zoroastrian scriptures are called Zend Avesta. They contain three parts. The first is Vendidad. This contains religious laws and ancient mythical tales. The second is Visparad. The third is Yasna.

The Avesta contains direct conversations between Zoroaster and Ahura Mazda, the Supreme Lord.

FIRE, THE SYMBOL OF GOD

People believe that the religion of Zoroaster was fire-worship. This is a mistake. "Do not say that the Iranians were fire-worshippers. They were worshippers of one God." These are the utterances of the great Firdusi. Fire is a sacred and supreme symbol of God. It is a sacred symbol in the Avesta. Fire is considered as the son of Ahura Mazda. The prophet of Iran did not teach fire-worship. He taught the worship of the one Supreme Lord of the universe, Ahura Mazda. Fire is the symbol of divine in all sacrifices. It is a sacred object. It is the symbol of divine life. It is the sacred symbol most revered by the Zoroastrians of today.

In every religion, fire has been the symbol of the Supreme Lord. Brahman is fire in Hinduism. Ahura Mazda is fire. The Jews worship their God as a pillar of fire. The Christians declare that their God is a consuming fire. Fire symbolised the brilliance of the Lord. It is purifying. Fire stands for effulgence, illumination. The worship of Agni or Fire comes in the Vedas also. In the Bible it is said, "God is light." Upanishads declare "Brahman is Jyotirmaya (full of light)." In every religion fire finds a place in rituals. Fire brings the message that God is Light of lights. Zoroaster himself held Fire in great sanctity as a noble gift from God. He summoned Fire from the sky and pointed it to heaven. The Heavens burst into fire. Some of the flames darted downwards and fired the altar at his side. Sacred fire in the altar of a temple is a symbol that reminds the Parsee of the glory of Ahura Mazda. It is called Atar in the Avesta.

Fire is declared to be the most helpful of all the spiritual intelligences or archangels. He is the most friendly. He comes down from Ahura Mazda. He is acquainted with all heavenly secrets.

The Jews received for the first time the ideas of heaven and hell, of angels and archangels of Messiah, of the resurrection and the last day of judgment from Zoroastrianism. These have laid the foundation to the doctrines of Christianity and Islam also.

AHURA MAZDA

Ahura Mazda is the Supreme Universal Lord. He is All-pervading. He is the source and the fountain of life. He corresponds to the Hiranyagarbha of the Hindus. He is the Brilliant, Majestic, Greatest, Best, most Beautiful, the strongest, most intellectual, the Highest through Holiness, the Holiest among the heavenly who created the world. He is changeless, mighty, just, merciful, most beneficial.

The prophet of Iran preached that all that is good and beneficial to mankind is the creation of Ahura Mazda and everything that is malignant is the creation of Ahriman or Satan.

The following are the commands which Ahura Mazda, the supreme Lord has sent to the followers of Zoroastrianism through His prophet Zoroaster. To know God as one, to know the Prophet Zoroaster as His true prophet, to have perfect faith in the religion and the Zend Avesta, to have unswerving faith in the goodness of God; not to disobey any of the commands of Zoroastrianism, to shun all evil actions, to do virtuous actions, to pray five times a day, to face some bright object like sun while worshipping God, to have perfect faith in the justice on the fourth morning after death, to exert for attaining heaven and to fear hell, to think always that God has done what He willed and shall do what He wills.

Zoroastrianism teaches that the goal of life is to attain perfect eternal happiness through companionship with Ahura Mazda. The means for attaining the everlasting bliss is Asha or holiness. Holiness or purity is the soul of Zoroastrianism.

TAOISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

‘Tao’ is a Chinese word meaning ‘way’, ‘way of Heaven’, ‘Path’ or ‘road’ or ‘method’. It indicates a line or principle of conduct. There is no proper English term for Tao’. It means the ‘Eternal Being’.

The Founder of Taoism was Lao-Tze. Lao-Tze was born in 604 B.C. in the village of Chu-Jhren, in Li country, belonging to the Ku province of the State Chu. He was born under the plum tree (in Chinese ‘Li’). He adopted it as his surname. The hair of the head was white when he was born. Hence he was called Lao-Tze (old boy) or philosopher, one who is child-like even when old.

He was popularly called Lao-Tze. His name was Er (ear). He was called Tan after his death. ‘Tan’ means ‘long lobe’. He had peculiar long ears. His appellation was ‘Po Yang’ or “count of positive principle”. He was a keeper or recorder of the secret Archives in the Royal court of Chore. He was a State Historian.

TAO

Lao-Tze says: Tao is one. It was in the beginning. It will remain for ever. It is Impersonal, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, bodiless, immaterial. It cannot be perceived by the senses. It is nameless. It is indescribable.

It is the first cause from which all substances take their origin and all phenomena flow. The great Tao is all-pervading. All things depend on it for life. It is the mother of all phenomena, of heaven and earth. It existed before the Personal God. It is the father of God. It is the producer of God. It is the originator of heaven and earth. It is the mother of all things.

You will find that there is an aroma of Indian Vedantic philosophy in the teachings of Lao-Tze.

Tao is everywhere. It is in the ant. It is in the grass. It is in the earthen-ware vessel. It is in excrement. It is in the highest place but is not high. It is in the lowest place, but is not low. It is in ancient times, but itself is not ancient. It is in old age but itself is not old. It is everywhere, but appears to be nowhere.

Tao is the sanctuary where all things find refuge. It is the good man’s priceless treasure. It is the guardian and saviour of him who is not good. Tao overspreads and sustains all things.

The Tao which can be expressed in word is not the Eternal Tao. The name which can be uttered is not its Eternal Name.

Whatever is contrary to the Tao soon ends. When the great Tao prevails, the outer doors need not be closed. All will be virtuous. There will be no theft.

If Tao perishes, then virtue will perish. If virtue perishes, then charity will perish. If charity perishes, then righteousness will perish. If righteousness perishes, then ceremonies will perish.

The man who achieves harmony with Tao enters into close union with external objects. No object has the power to harm or hinder him.

Tao does nothing. It has no bodily form. It cannot be seen. It has its root in Itself. From Tao came the mysterious existence of God. It produced heaven and earth. It was before the primordial ether. Tao produces all things and nourishes them. It presides over all. Tao is the fundamental principle of the philosophy and religion of Lao-Tze.

The way of the Tao is to act without thinking of acting, to taste without discerning any flavour, to consider what is small as great, and a few as many, and to react injury by kindness.

THE MEANS FOR ATTAINING THE TAO

Purity, humility, contentment, compassion, kindness towards all living creatures, higher knowledge and self-control are the means for attaining the Tao. Concentration and Pranayama (breathing exercises) are helpful in the path of Tao.

SAYINGS OF LAO-TZE

Tao Te Ching (canon of Tao and its manifestation) contains the sayings and teachings of Lao-Tze. Lao-Tze himself wrote this book in the sixth century B.C. This title was given by Emperor Ching. He issued an imperial decree that Lao-Tze's work on Tao should be respected as a canonical book.

He who acts, destroys. He who grasps, loses. Therefore, the sage does not act and so does not destroy. He does not grasp and so he does not lose.

Without going out of doors, one may know the entire universe; without looking out of the window, one may see the way of heaven. The further one travels, the less one may know. Thus it is that without moving you shall know; without looking you shall see; without doing you shall attain.

Sincere words are not fine; fine words are not sincere.

If you would contract, you must first expand. If you would weaken, you must first strengthen. If you would overthrow, you must first raise up. If you would take, you must first give. This is called the dawn of intelligence.

To the good I would be good. To the not good, I would also be good in order to make them good.

He who humbles himself shall be preserved entire. He who bends shall be made straight. He who is empty shall be filled. He who is worn out shall be renewed. He who has little shall succeed. He who has much shall go astray.

Some things are increased by being demolished and others are diminished by being increased.

Those who know, do not speak; those who speak, do not know.

To know when one does not know is best. To think one knows when one does not know is a dire disease. Only he who recognises this disease as a disease can cure himself of the disease.

I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize. The first is gentleness; the second is frugality; the third is humility, which keeps me from putting myself before others. Be gentle, and you can be bold; be frugal and you can be liberal. Avoid putting yourself before others and you can become a leader among men.

There is no greater sin than yielding to desire; no greater misery than discontentment; no greater calamity than the propensity to acquire.

Abandon your scheming. Put away your gains. Thieves and robbers will not exist.

Hold fast to that which will endure.

Show thyself simple, preserve thee pure, thine own keep small, thy desires poor.

Renounce learnedness and you will have no vexation.

He who overcomes others is strong, but he who overcomes himself is mighty.

CONCLUSION

Taoism has its monks and nuns. They wear yellow caps. They retire from the world and live in caves, forests and secluded retreats in mountains.

Taoism inculcates the highest ethics, pure living and discipline of mind and body.

Emancipation is attained through the realisation of Tao through self conquest.

There is the idea of purgatory in Taoism, of the reward and punishment after death. There is also rebirth. Lao-Tze believed in

the immortality of the Soul. He advocated the doctrine of reincarnation of the soul after death.

Sincerity is the first step towards the knowledge of Tao. That knowledge is maintained by silence. Tao is employed with gentleness.

When the aspirant is serene and tranquil, his wisdom becomes complete. When his wisdom becomes complete, the light of intelligence grows around him. When the light of intelligence grows around him, he is one with the Tao. This is true forgetfulness, a forgetting which does not forget, a forgetting of what cannot be forgotten. That which cannot be forgotten is the True Tao.

Glory to Lao-Tze, the founder of Taoism, that old boy who was born under the plum tree with peculiar long lobes, with white hair, the reputed sage of China! Glory, glory to Tao, the Eternal Great One, the Brahman of the Upanishads !!

CONFUCIANISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Confucius was born in 551 B.C. in the feudal State of Lu, a portion of what is now the province of Shangtung on the north-eastern seaboard of China. The name of Confucius in Chinese is Kung-fu-tse, i.e., the statesman-philosopher Kung. The first European scholars who visited China found that name hard to pronounce. So they turned it into Latin and called him Confucius.

There are three religions in China, viz., Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Confucius and Lao-Tze, founder of, Taoism, were contemporaries. They are sages and philosophers. They are not regarded as Saviours. Lao-Tze was fifty-three years older than Confucius. They met each other. Socrates and Buddha also were the contemporaries of Confucius.

Confucianism is not a religion in the customary sense. It has neither priesthood nor any monastic order. It existed in China long before the time of Confucius. In one of his recorded sayings he speaks of himself, as a 'transmitter' and not a 'maker' or 'originator'. He did not give a new religion to the world or a new ethical code. What he gave to the world was only a powerful restatement of the fundamental principles of human morality or ethics. He issued a new and improved edition of the old one. The moral code he framed was most admirable. It contained grand ethical truths.

Some say that Confucianism is no religion in reality, because Confucius is a philosopher, moralist, statesman and educationist, but no religionist. They say that the thoughts and teachings of Confucius are ethical philosophy, political and educational principle, but not religious philosophy.

Confucius had a deep study of his country's literature and history. He had a strong conviction that just and righteous rulers only can protect the State and make the people virtuous. His ideal was to create a race of wise rulers like King Janaka. It was with this view he wandered from State to State in search of a good ruler.

Confucius devoted himself to the improvement of Society. He ever thought of the well-being of the Society. He tried his level best to contribute much to the social welfare. "The Analects" or collection of sayings treats mainly of social welfare, human peace and harmony in Society. He strained his every nerve in giving moral training to people. He laid very great emphasis on cultivation of ethical virtues. He tried to remove the discordant or disturbing elements in Society. He had a strong conviction that if the superiors and elders had a blameless character, others would follow them and there would be love and universal peace everywhere. As these social thoughts ever occupied his mind, he had no time to discuss on God and life after death. Moreover, he did not find it necessary also to dwell on these subjects.

BOOKS

The following four books are intimately concerned with the principles of Confucianism, viz., Ta-Hsueh, the Great Learning or learning for adults; Chung Yung, The Doctrine of the Mean; Lun Yu, the Confucian Analects in twenty books; and Meng Tzu, the Philosophy of Mencius.

Ta-Hsueh is a politico-ethical treatise. Chung Yung was written by Kung Chi, a grandson of Confucius. It is a purely philosophical book. It treats of some general principles that concern the nature of mean and right conduct. Lun Yu, the Confucian Analects, contains sayings and conversations between the Teacher and his disciples. Meng Tzu, the philosophy of Mencius, is written by an ardent Confucianist. It deals with various questions raised by his disciples. It gives advice to rulers of feudal states. It treats of psychology, political theory and economics.

SAYINGS

What the superior man seeks is in himself; what the small man seeks is in others. The superior man is dignified, but does not wrangle; social, but not a partisan. He does not promote a man simply because of his words, nor does he put good words aside because of the man.

Have sufficient self-control even to judge of others in comparison with yourself, and to act towards them as you would wish them to act to you. This is what one may call the 'doctrine of humanity', and there is nothing beyond this.

The way to become a superior man is to set one's affections on what is right, to love learning, which is the source of knowledge and virtue, with which nothing else can be compared. When righteousness is pursued with sincerity and a mind free from self-deception, the heart becomes rectified.

Up to this stage the individual has been busy only with his own improvement; but the cultivation of the person influences primarily those around him, and ultimately the whole empire. Everyone, therefore, should carefully cultivate his person, having a due regard for others besides himself. Each man must guard his words and watch his conduct. He must fly all that is base and disquieting, and must take benevolence as his dwelling-place, righteousness as his road, propriety as his garment, wisdom as his lamp, and faithfulness as his charm. Dignity, reverence, loyalty and faithfulness make up the qualities of a cultivated man. His dignity separates him from the crowd; being reverent, he is beloved; being loyal, he is submitted to; and, being faithful, he is trusted.

TEACHINGS

Confucius gave a great impetus to education and learning, and the study of rules of right conduct with a view to their practical application. According to his teaching, man's chief end is to know

and make the most of himself as a member of Society. He preached to his disciples and the people the principles of good life and social harmony.

His teaching was largely concerned with the problems of good government. He said, "The Ruler himself should be virtuous, just, honest and dutiful. A virtuous ruler is like the Pole-star which, by keeping its place, makes all other stars to revolve round it. As is the Ruler, so will be the subjects."

What was Confucius' idea of virtue? His word for it was '*Jen*'. The proper understanding of his ethical doctrine chiefly depends on the implications of *Jen*. There is no single English equivalent of *Jen* in all its shades of meaning. The essence of all his teachings may be summed up under this one word '*Jen*'. The nearest equivalent to this difficult word is "social virtue". All those virtues which help to maintain social harmony and peace like benevolence, charity, magnanimity, sincerity, respectfulness, altruism, diligence, loving kindness, goodness are included in *Jen*.

Confucius said: "A virtuous man has three awes:—(1) Awe for Heaven's decree, (2) Awe for great men and (3) Awe for saints' words. When worshipping God, one must feel as if He were visibly present."

The teaching of Confucius is that the entire world and every being are constantly changing and that the most essential aspect for human life is the present Reality.

Confucius held that Society was made up of five relationships, viz., those of husband and wife, of parent and child, of elder and younger brother, or generally of elders and youngsters, of Ruler and Minister or subject, and of friend and friend. A country would be well-governed when all the parties performed their parts aright in these relationships. Confucius said: "There was Tao (a way or road of righteousness) only when fathers were fathers, when sons were sons, when Rulers were Rulers and when ministers were ministers."

Confucius laid great stress on the cultivation of character, purity of heart and conduct. He exhorted the people to develop a good character first, which is a priceless jewel and which is the best of all virtues.

CONCLUSION

Confucius has had a great part in moulding the history of China and his influence is to this day a dominant factor in the public and private life of that country.

Confucius has rendered immortal the Sixth Century B.C. He was a born ruler of men. He would have shone as one of the world's greatest monarchs, if circumstances had been favourable. He had a highly developed moral sense and a profound realisation of the supreme importance of morals in human life. His greatness has been universally recognised for many centuries. He is held in the highest reverence by hundreds of millions of the world's inhabitants.

Glory to Confucius, the great moralist, statesman and social reformer of China.

SHINTOISM

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

INTRODUCTION

Shinto or Kaminomichi or the way of the Kami or the Gods is the name of the religion observed by the Japanese from time immemorial. 'Kami' means God or deity, or sometimes soul. Shinto implies spontaneous following of the 'Way of the Gods'. Shinto is not really an 'ism'. It is only a teaching. It is not a set of verbal theories or concepts. It is the all-pervading way.

It is very difficult to translate 'Shinto' into English. 'Shinto' means 'The way of the Gods' or the 'God-like way' or 'The way from the Gods'. There is no proper equivalent for the term 'Shinto' in English. Shinto is an all-pervading, indefinable way which is quite universal.

Shinto is divided into two classes, viz., the Sectarian Shinto, which is sub-divided into 13 sects; and the Shinto of the national faith of the Japanese, or the State Shinto Religion.

A perfect understanding of Shinto will enable one to have proper understanding of the Japanese nation and their culture. There is neither much grand philosophy nor complicated ritual in Shintoism. Shinto is not a religion adopted by the State. It is a religion of the heart. Shinto is a natural and real spiritual force which pervades the life of the Japanese. Shinto is a creative or formative principle of life. The Shinto principle is the background of Japanese culture, code of ethics, fine arts, family and national structure.

Shinto is the chief agent which has rejuvenated, vitalised and reinforced the social and religious life of Japan.

The system of Shinto resembles more the system of Hinduism than that of Confucianism or Buddhism. It is a kind of personal religion. It ascribes divine attributes to every being. It is a kind of pantheism.

For the Japanese, nation means a harmonious complex of individuals, Kuni-hito. Salvation, for the Japanese, means the salvation of the whole nation instead of salvation of a few individuals.

SHINTO THEOLOGY

According to Shinto theology, *Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi* is the Absolute Universal Self. This corresponds to *Hiranyagarbha* or the thread-Soul (*Sutratman*) of the Hindus. The visible universe (Ken Kai) and the invisible world (Yu Kai) have come into being from *Ame-no-mi-naka-nushi* through the activities of the three deities of Musubi, Principle of Creation, Completion and the Controlling Bond between the spiritual and the material, the invisible and the visible, the real and the ideal. These contradictory attributes are functional only. The Absolute Universal Self is not affected by these contradictory attributes. It is beyond these attributes. It corresponds to the Nirguna Brahman (Attributeless Absolute) of Hinduism. The idea of time has come into existence from the attributes.

Absolute loyalty to the Sovereign Emperor, who is regarded as a direct descendant and representative of the highest God, respect for ancestors, profound feeling of piety towards the parents and love for children form the fundamental structure of the Great Universal Way.

The mirror, the sword and the jewel have a figurative meaning in the course of the development of Shinto. They symbolise wisdom, courage and benevolence or intelligence, will and love in Shinto theology. These three are the holy ensigns of royalty of the Sovereign Emperor. They are supposed to symbolise the dynamic working of the Great Way and so they are found in the forefront of every Shinto shrine, popularly known as *Mistu-tomo-e* or the three big commas.

There are many Gods in Shinto, but the ancestral Sun-God, *Anaterasu-omi Kami*, stands supreme above them,

Susano-o-no-Mikoto is the impetuous divine brother of the Sun-God. He is the God of rain-storm. *Tsukiyomi-no-Mikoto* is

the Moon-God. These three constitute a divine triad. They preside, respectively, over the plane of High Heaven, the vast ocean, and the realm of Night.

SHINTO ETHICS

Purity is one of the fundamental virtues of Shinto ethics. There are two significations of purity. One is outer purity or bodily purity and the other inner purity or purity of heart. If a man is endowed with true inner purity of heart, he will surely attain God-realisation or communion with the Divine. Sincerity is also the guiding ethical principle of Shinto.

TEN PRECEPTS OF SHINTO

- i) Do not transgress the will of the gods.
- ii) Do not forget your obligations to ancestors.
- iii) Do not offend by violating the decrees of the State.
- iv) Do not forget the profound goodness of the gods, through which calamity and misfortunes are averted and sickness is healed.
- v) Do not forget that the world is one great family.
- vi) Do not forget the limitations of your own person.
- vii) Do not become angry even though others become angry.
- viii) Do not be sluggish in your work.
- ix) Do not bring blame to the teaching.
- x) Do not be carried away by foreign teachings.

SHINTO SAYINGS

The heart of the person before you is a mirror. See there your own form.

Even the wishes of an ant reach to heaven.

Leave the things of this world and come to me daily with pure bodies and pure hearts.

A single sincere prayer moves heaven. You will surely realise the divine presence through sincere prayer.

Where you have sincerity, there also is virtue. Sincerity is a witness to truth. Sincerity is the mother of knowledge. Sincerity is a single virtue that binds Divinity and man in one.

Retribution for good or ill is as sure as the shadow after substance.

To do good is to be pure. To commit evil is to be impure.

To admit a fault is the beginning of righteousness.

The first and surest means to enter into communion with the Divine is sincerity. If you pray to a deity with sincerity, you will surely feel the divine presence.

COMMON SHINTO PRAYER

Our eyes may see some uncleanness, but let not our mind see things that are not clean. Our ears may hear some uncleanness, but let not our mind hear things that are not clean.

CONCLUSION

Shinto is the 'Way to God'. 'Tao' of Lao-Tze is also the 'Way to God'. Lord Jesus says: "I am the Truth, Way and the Life." Lord Krishna says: "Howsoever men approach Me, even so, do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Partha!"

The Way to God is as much important as the end or destination or God itself. The Way to God is righteousness or *Dharma*. He who shows the Way is the Guru or the spiritual preceptor. Guru and God are one. If you stick to the Way, you soon reach God. If you stick to your Guru, you will surely attain God-realisation. Way, Truth, Life-everlasting are one.

Glory to the Way, Shinto or Tao! Glory to Guru! Glory, glory to God, the Destination or Goal of all religions. May Shinto or Tao guide you, rejuvenate, vitalise and reinforce you all! Be true to Shinto or Tao.

(B) GOSPELS OF WORLD'S RELIGIONS

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

Religion is the pathway to peace and universal brotherhood.
Religion shows the way to God-realisation.
Religion is a bond between God and man.
Religion has the tremendous power of transforming one's character.
Religion is better understood when it is practised more and more.
Without religion there can be no morality.
A life without religion and spirituality is a dreary waste and death.
Education without religion is not worth the name.

ONE RELIGION

There is only one religion — the religion of love.
There is only one religion — the religion of the heart.
There is only one religion — the religion of Vedanta.
There is only one religion — the religion of unity, the religion of oneness.

REAL RELIGION

Real religion is above the mind and senses.
Real religion is Self-realisation.
The essence of religion is divine experience.
The essence of religion is love and unity.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Brahman, Allah, Krishna, Khuda, Ahur Mazda,
Jehovah, Shinto, Tao, Buddha, Zoroaster,
Jesus, Mahavir, Confucius —

All are essentially one and the same.
Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti —
Truth is one; sages call it by different names.

UNIVERSAL RELIGIOUS TEACHING

The essentials of all religions are the same.
Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise;
Be good, do good, be kind, be compassionate;
Enquire “who am I?”, know the Self, and be free;
Love all, serve all, serve the Lord in all;
Speak the truth, be pure, be humble;
Concentrate, meditate and attain Self-realisation,
These are the essentials of all religions.
Customs, conventions and ceremonies are non-essentials.
Do not fight over petty non-essentials.
Prayer, fasting, charity and pilgrimage.
Are the first steps in all religions.
Be tolerant, be catholic, have a broad outlook;
Respect all prophets, all saints, all messengers;
All saints speak about the same Truth.

ONE CASTE, ONE RELIGION, ONE GOD

There is only one caste — the caste of humanity.
There is only one religion — the religion of love.
There is only one righteousness — that is truthfulness.
There is only one law — the law of cause and effect.
There is only one God — the omnipresent, omniscient,
omnipotent Lord.
There is only one language — the language of the heart
or the language of Silence.

PATH OF TRUE RELIGION

What is religion ? It is Self-realisation.

Realisation of God is real religion; all the rest is only preparation.

Religion is assiduous spiritual practice and Self-knowledge.

Religion is the way to God.

If God is one, religion must also be one, though its forms may differ in accordance with the psychological constituent of the individuals.

Religion is not a set of opinions, dogmas and rituals, but a mode of life in the Eternal.

Religion shows the way to immortality or eternal peace, bliss and wisdom.

Religion does not consist in merely believing in a particular creed or dogma. It is the realisation of cosmic unity.

Religion is a means of attaining the goal of life, namely, God-realisation.

This goal is the attainment of the Divine Consciousness.

The aim of religion is to take you out of your self-wrought limitations and put you in tune with the Infinite.

The essence of religion lies in the immediate experience of the Divine.

Remember, the essence of religion is a life of goodness, righteousness, purity and selfless service.

The essence of religion is truth; the essence of law is virtue.

True religion is one. It is based on love, truth and non-injury.

Be good. Do good. Be kind. Be pure. Be compassionate. Love all. These are the common fundamentals of all religions.

Real religion awakens man to a consciousness of the unity of all existence and a perception of the one Spiritual Essence in all beings.

To bestow on us eternal bliss is the main concern of religion or religious practices.

Be pure, truthful and unselfish. This is the essence of religion. This is the whole gist of religion.

Man becomes God through discipline, self-restraint and Meditation. This is religion.

ESSENCE OF ALL RELIGIONS

All the great religions of the world preach the gospel of peace.

Each religion shows a way to the realisation of God. As such, religion is indispensable to man.

There are different religions for different aspirants, times and countries.

The noble teachings of all religions centre in the realisation and practice of universal brotherhood.

All religions advocate self-restraint and self-abnegation.

Non-injury, truthfulness, purity and tolerance are the four moral pillars of all religions.

Every religion, faith and prophet should be respected. All true religions bring to the despairing man comfort, solace, spiritual strength, peace, courage and wisdom.

The essence of all faiths is freedom and happiness.

“Love all. Serve all. Practise self-restraint. Be pure. Be virtuous. Be tolerant. Be selfless. Do charity. Share what you have with others. Have faith and devotion. Meditate on God.” All prophets were unanimous about these precepts.

When the fundamentals of all religions are one and the same, where is the need for a new religion called “Universalism”?

What is needed is a proper education of the followers of all religions.

Let everyone practise his own religion and strive to attain the goal in his own way. Let him not interfere in the beliefs of others.

Stop all religious quarrels. Act. Start your pilgrimage. March heroically to the peak of Perfection.

LIGHT ON RELIGION

Without religion, you live in vain. It is death for you.

A religion of rituals and formalities, without philosophy, is superstition. Religion and philosophy must go hand in hand.

Mere study, mere discussion, mere lecturing will not do. Realise the truths of religion now and here.

Religion is realisation, not religious observances, theories and doctrines.

Religion is not mere belief or ringing of bells or blowing conches. It is a concrete realisation of the Unknown.

Religion is not in books. It is in the heart of man.

Mere intellectual assent to some truths cannot make you really religious.

Religion is the attainment of the pure Divine Consciousness and Its expression in daily life.

Religion is freedom from ignorance, illusion, fear, doubt, grief and delusion.

Religion gives the solution for the riddle of life and death.

There is harmony between religion and science. Their misunderstanding causes disharmony.

The essence of religion lies in the immediate experience of the Supernatural, which is obtained by regular practice.

Religion is supreme science which directs and regulates a man's life, his aspiration and his conduct.

The religious ideal inspires man to live an ideal life and realise the ultimate Reality.

There is only one religion for all the prophets and saints. The differences in their teachings are only to suit different conditions of time, region and people.

Hypocrisy in the garb of religion is a crime.

Watertight compartments in the name of religion are a mockery.

IMBIBE THE SPIRIT OF RELIGION

Religion produces a living influence on the heart and life of a person. It affords spiritual food for the mind. It transforms man into Divinity. It is Life Divine. It melts, purifies and changes the heart.

The foundation of religion is faith. Its superstructure is Self-realisation. Its walls are holiness, truthfulness, purity and non-injury. Discrimination, dispassion, serenity, self-restraint, one-pointedness of mind, aspiration, and other virtues are the bricks. Love is cement.

Social customs and contentions have been given the status of religion by ignorant people. These social customs and conventions cannot, however, be called religion. They change from time to time according to the existence of the occasion for the preservation of the structure of society and the spiritual well-being of the individuals.

You cannot call social customs and conventions religion. Religion is eternal and unchanging. If you strictly follow it, it will lead you to eternal bliss and freedom from the trammels of birth and death.

All religions point out the path to God-realisation, perfection or freedom. All religions are essentially the same. Real religion is one. It is the realisation of oneness or unity of creation. It is the religion of love. All religions are merely different versions of the one religion of Oneness and love.

Man has forgotten all about his religion on account of ignorance or lust for power and greed. He has become irreligious. So he has come down to the level of the brutes. He has lost all sense of immortality. He does havoc. He creates mischief. He stabs, loots and burns houses. The law of the jungle prevails. What a disgraceful, deplorable state!

If man always remembers the essential unity of the Self, if he is religious, if he has really understood that all beings are

fundamentally one, that all are children of the one God, if he has the knowledge of the law of action, of the teachings of saints, prophets and seers, if he has understood the illusory nature of this world, he will never think of doing any harm to others in thought, word or deed. He will never manufacture bombs. He will never think of self-aggrandisement. He will ever lead the Life Divine and be happy at all times. He will be ever serving others. He will contribute all he has in his power towards the happiness of others.

An irreligious life is the cause of wars and riots. It is the cause of restlessness, power-politics, party-politics, division, separation, murder, arson and all sorts of disgraceful, abominable, heaven-closing, brutal acts.

A really religious man is a veritable God on this earth. He is a cementing, synthetic force. He is all love. His heart is filled with mercy, kindness and affection. He is a blessed peacemaker. He is a super-man.

Quoting scriptures will not make one religious. Taking one meal a day, bending the knees in a place of prayer, standing upon the head or on one leg for three hours or till sun set, practising Hatha Yoga, or gazing at the sun — none of these make one religious. A religious life is a life of rigorous discipline. It is the annihilation of the lower self and a rich life of bliss and fullness in the Eternal.

Take away religion, then man lives to no purpose. He is far, far away from the purpose of his creation. Life is then a dreary waste here. There is no real living without religion. It is only religion that makes existence valuable and fills the mind with love, devotion, serenity and cheerfulness. True religion shows its influence in every part of one's conduct and makes one's life sublime and divine. Religion is the tie that links man with his Creator.

Religion is the foundation of society, the source of all good and happiness, and the basis of all virtue and prosperity of the individual and the nation. Civilisation, law, order, morality and all

that elevate man and give peace to the nation, are the fruit of the practice of religion.

Religion teaches man about his close relation with God, and produces in him the spiritual awakening of the Divine consciousness. It generates vigorous, sublime thoughts. Religion is mixed up with one's very being and daily life. It gives one assurance of perennial joy, eternal life, everlasting bliss and new hope when all mundane hope disappears.

Religious life is the greatest of all blessings. It lifts man from the mire of worldliness, impurity and infidelity. The intellect is vain if it is not illuminated by religion. Religion does what philosophy can never do. If you live in accordance with the rules of religion, you will attain wisdom, immortality, everlasting peace and eternal bliss. You will become the wisest, the best and the happiest among men.

Religion is the final centre of repose and undying peace. It is the goal to which all things tend. It is the impregnable citadel of virtue, purity and everlasting bliss. It is an invincible fortress which cannot be destroyed by any number of atomic bombs.

Religion is not emotionalism. It is not merely a little prayer which one offers when one suffers from a severe intestinal colic or some other painful disease. It is pre-eminently a code of life in the Eternal. It explains to the ignorant the nature of the Unseen, and shows the way to realise That.

May you all lead a true religious life and thus attain the final beatitude or immortal bliss!

AWAKEN THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

Religious disharmony is a misnomer. Religion unites people's hearts. No true follower of any religion will ever condemn other religions. He will, on the contrary, promote goodwill and understanding, peace and harmony.

What creates disharmony is the irreligious part of man, the animal-in-man. It is greed, lust, selfishness and egoism. They generate

fear, and fear leads to wars. None of the religions of the world sanctions these bestial qualities.

We are living in a new world. We are living in the atomic age. An immediate change of heart is inevitable. The strongest bond of love must unite the hearts of all. Bestial passions must be banished. This can be achieved only by the practice of religion.

The second factor that creates disharmony is intellectual gymnastics. The true follower of any religion will busy himself with practising its tenets. He will be conscious only of the need to perfect himself. But the intellect is fond of creating newer and newer theories and, therefore, greater and greater division. Intellect should yield place to heart; practice should take precedence over theory.

(C) CARDINALS OF WORLD'S RELIGIONS

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

HINDUISM

1. Truth is one, sages call it variously.
2. Brahman is the only Reality; this world is unreal; the individual soul is identical with Brahman.
3. The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman.
4. There is no freedom or salvation without knowledge of the Imperishable.
5. Karma Yoga or selfless action purifies the heart. Worship removes the oscillation of the mind. Knowledge removes the veil of ignorance.
6. Know that Brahman through faith, devotion, meditation and Yoga.
7. Brahman is truth, wisdom and infinity.
8. Om is the symbol of Brahman.
9. This Self is to be seen, heard, reflected and meditated upon.
10. One should not hurt any living being because the same God dwells in all.

11. A liberated sage is ever peaceful and blissful. He has equal vision and balance of mind.

12. He who bathes in the sacred Ganges purifies seven descendants. As long as the bones of a man touch the Ganges water, so long is that man adored in heaven.

13. Three things are very difficult to obtain—a human birth, desire for liberation, and the company of saints and sages.

14. The whole world is a manifestation of the Lord.

15. Just as a lump of salt has neither an inside nor an outside and is the same in taste, so also does this Soul have neither inside nor outside and is nothing but knowledge.

16. Without the Grace of the Lord one cannot attain knowledge of the Eternal.

17. Conquest of the mind is conquest of the world.

18. Whence have we come? Whither shall we go? These are the fundamental questions of life.

19. Neither by actions, nor through progeny nor wealth, but through renunciation alone can immortality be attained.

20. Just as all the waters of the rivers have their meeting place in the ocean, so also all touches have their centre in the skin, all tastes in the tongue, all odours in the nose, all colours in the eye, all sounds in the ear, all perceptions in the mind, and all knowledge in the heart.

21. Where nothing else can be seen, where nothing else can be heard and where nothing else can be known, that is the Infinite.

22. Non-injury, truthfulness and freedom from theft, lust, anger and greed, and an attempt to do what is agreeable and beneficial to all creatures, is the common duty of all castes.

23. When a man dies, his spirit goes into the fire, his breath into the atmosphere, his eye to the sun, his thoughts to the moon, his ear to the heavens, his body to the earth, his ego to the ether, his hair to

the plants and trees, his blood and semen to the waters.

24. Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite bestows fruit.

25. He who considers another's wife as his mother, his wealth as insignificant, and all beings as himself, is wise.

26. There is no virtue higher than truthfulness, and no crime greater than falsehood.

27. Truth alone conquers, not falsehood.

28. Be subdued. Give. Be merciful.

29. O Lord! Thou art the woman, Thou art the man, Thou art the youth, Thou art the maiden, Thou art the old man leaning on Thy staff. Thou art born with Thy face turned everywhere. Thou art the dark-blue bee. Thou art the green parrot with red eyes. Thou art the thunder-cloud, the seasons, the seas, Thou art without beginning because Thou art infinite. From Thou art all the worlds are born.

ZOROASTRIANISM

1. Changeless art Thou, Ahur Mazda, the same now and for ever ! Transcendent Being art Thou, unmoved amidst moving things, unaffected in the midst of manifold changes.

2. Supreme is the Lord, the never-changing, the immutable, whilst everything, everywhere, waxes to wane, grows to decay, takes birth but to die.

3. Thou art light, Ahur Mazda! Where Thou art there is Light. Void of Thee is darkness. Unseen by all, Thou seest all. Nothing is hidden from Thee !

4. The Great One is not merely a remote spectator of the world He has created. He is immanent and man can enter into close relation with Him.

5. He is all-pervading. There is no conceivable place where He is not. Closer than the eyes, ears, nose, mouth or face - closer than these is He.

6. He is the one and the same God, but men give Him many Names.

7. Do not become presumptuous through great connections, family and race. For, in the end you can depend on your own deeds alone.

8. The Unseen, deceiving Death, comes to everyone. He accepts neither compliment nor bribe. He respects no persons and strikes down ruthlessly all living beings.

9. Form no covetous desire, for the demon of greed will grip thee and blind thee to the beauty and purity of the world and make the Spirit unperceivable.

10. The flesh in its numberless forms and colours divides and keeps apart and aloof man from man. But the Spirit is one and the same in all.

11. Be diligent and moderate and eat of thine own regular industry. Offer a share of thy things to the needy.

12. The first perfection is good thoughts. The second, good words; and the third, good deeds. To live in falsehood is worse than death.

13. The three great concerns of men are to love an enemy and make him a friend, to make him who is unrighteous righteous, and to make the ignorant learned.

14. Hold your heart, your mind, your hands and your feet ever in readiness to the well-doing of the lawful deeds.

15. Let all men practise these fivefold good works: liberality, truthfulness, thankfulness, contentment, and wanting to produce the welfare of others and become the friend of all.

16. That nature alone is good which will never do unto another whatever is not good unto its own self. Do not do unto others that which is not good to thyself.

17. Poverty, though begotten by honesty, is better than opulence which is acquired from others.

18. The greatest thing, the greatest good for man in this life, is purity. He attains the celestial abode who has procured this purity by cleansing himself through good thoughts, words and deeds.

19. Righteousness is the best acquisition of man; it is the greatest of all riches. All the world is only dust, but righteousness ends not, for it is deathless.

20. The essence of religion is truth, the essence of law is virtue.

21. Be not enamoured of respect and reverence; shun them. They hinder spiritual life.

22. Health is real wealth. Wisdom is the real gold and diamond. Contentment constitutes real richness. Faith, virtue, piety and honesty are the greatest treasures of man.

23. To commit no sin is better than repentance, retribution and renunciation of sin.

24. He has gained nothing who has not gained the Soul. Wisdom, which is not accompanied by goodness, is no wisdom.

25. Do not be too much busying thyself with the affairs of the world, for, over-concern about the world becomes destructive to the Spirit.

26. Time is life, and time ill-spent is life wasted away. Time is more precious than the most valuable thing in the world. It can be neither bought nor borrowed. Trifle it not away. Make the utmost use of it.

27. Truth knows no racial or geographical boundary. Truth is the same for all. Truth always triumphs and conquers falsehood even as the dazzling sun blinds the owl.

JUDAISM

1. Suffering is a path of life. Suffering atones more than sacrifice.

2. Be still and know that I am God.

3. The body is the scabbard of the Soul.

4. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

5. The value of words uttered with the lips is determined by the devotion of the heart.

6. Weigh thy words in a balance, and make a door and bar for thy mouth.

7. He who glances, in his lust, even at the corner of a woman's heel, is as if he had committed adultery with her.

8. Make way for every work of mercy, for every man shall find according to his works.

9. Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the street.

10. God did neither make woman from man's head that she should rule over him, nor from his feet that she should be his slave, but from his side that she should be near his head.

11. He who does no good in his own Soul would do no good to others.

12. Give me any plague but not the plague of the heart.

13. In three things a man's character is recognised—in the wine cup, in his purse, and in his anger.

14. Be as strong as a leopard, as swift as an eagle, as fleet-footed as a gazelle and as brave as a lion, to do the Will of thy Father who is in the heaven.

15. More flesh, more worms; more wealth, more care; more women, more witchcraft; more maid-servants, more lewdness; more male-servants, more thieving; more Torah, more life; more assiduity, more wisdom; more counsel, more understanding; more charity, more peace.

16. He gives little who gives much with a frown; he gives much who gives little with a smile.

17. He that gives should never remember (his gift); he that receives should never forget.

18. The best trading is with God.

19. Fear God and keep His commandments, because His is the whole duty of man, for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

20. A rich man carries his God in his pocket; a poor man in his heart.

21. Every word of God is pure. He is a shield unto them who put their trust in Him.

22. Whosoever walks towards God one cubit, God runs towards him twain.

23. God sends the remedy before the disease.

24. One hour of repentance and good actions in this world is more than all the life of the world to come.

25. Be first in greeting every man.

26. He who denies his guilt, doubles his guilt.

27. The most beautiful of all things man can do is to forgive wrong.

28. The best preacher is the heart; the best teacher is time; the best book is the world; the best friend is God.

29. That man is a hero who can make a friend of a foe.

30. Impurity in the beginning is like a spider's web; in the end it is like a cart-rope.

BUDDHISM

1. Abandon what is before, what is behind and what is in the middle, when thou goest to the other shore of existence. If thy mind is perfectly free, thou wilt not again enter into the cycle of birth and old age.

2. Him indeed I call a Brahmana who has cut all fetters, who

thirsts not for pleasure, who is independent and unshackled.

3. Hurt no one by word or deed; live a restrained life under the law; be moderate in eating; dwell in solitude; practise meditation. This is the teaching of the Buddha or the Awakened.

4. Not nakedness, not matted hair, not dirt, not fasting or lying on the earth, not rubbing the body with dust, not sitting motionless — none of these can purify a mortal who has not destroyed cravings and desires.

5. Earnestness is the path of immortality; thoughtlessness is the path that leads to death. Those who are earnest do not die; those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

6. The gift of the law exceeds all gifts, and the sweetness of the law exceeds all delight; the extinction of thirst for sense-objects overcomes all griefs and pains.

7. If anything is to be done, let a man do it; let him pursue it vigorously. A careless pilgrim only scatters the dust of his passions more widely.

8. Such a one who does his duty in tolerance like the earth, like Indra's bolt, — he is like a lake without mud; no new births are in store for him.

9. A man is not an elder because his hair is grey. Mere old age is called empty old age. He is called an elder in whom dwell truth, virtue, love, harmlessness, self-control, moderation and dispassion, and who is free from impurity and is wise.

10. If a man offends a harmless, pure and innocent person, the evil returns upon him as fine dust thrown against the wind.

11. Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart that it will not come near unto him. Even by the falling of water-drops is a water-pot filled; the fool becomes full of evil even if he gathers it little by little.

12. The perfume of virtue is more excellent than the fragrance

of the sandal, jasmine or lily. Ordinary is the fragrance of that which comes from sandal and jasmine. The perfume of those who are endowed with virtue rises up to the highest heaven.

13. Victory breeds hatred, because the conquered is unhappy. He who has given up both victory and defeat — the contented man — is ever happy.

14. Never does hatred cease by hating; it ceases only by love.

15. Better than kingship over the earth, better than dwelling in heaven, better than Lordship over all the worlds, is the reward of the first step in holiness or saintliness.

16. Even the gods envy those who are spiritually awakened, who practise meditation, who are wise and who take delight in seclusion and renunciation.

17. The taint of the body is laziness; the taint of the watchman is negligence; the taint of a woman is unchastity; the taint of a donor is miserliness. But there is a taint worse than all these taints—that is ignorance, the greatest taint. O man! wash off this taint and become taintless.

CHRISTIANITY

1. The Cross is the touchstone of faith.
2. I am the way, the truth and the life.
3. The voice of the people is the voice of God.
4. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.
5. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
6. To live is to serve God.
7. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.
8. Charity covereth a multitude of sins; let not thy right hand know what the left hand giveth.

9. The measure of our sacrifice is the measure of our love.

10. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled!

11. How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

12. When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogue and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

13. Good deeds are the best prayer.

14. Your Father knoweth what things ye shall need of, before you ask Him.

15. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds.

16. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

17. Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

18. The love of money is the root of all evils.

19. Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

20. Better an ounce of mercy than a pound of gold to the Church.

21. No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

22. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.

23. He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how

can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God loves his brother also.

24. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him.

25. For in Him we live and move and have our being, for we are also His offspring.

26. For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

27. Fear life, but do not fear death.

28. Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

29. Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.

30. Know thyself; afterwards know thy fellow-men.

31. Heaven and hell are in your heart.

32. Wherein I find you, there will I judge you.

33. A good conscience is God's voice.

ISLAM

1. Prayer carries us half-way to Allah; fasting takes us to the door of His palace; charity gains us admission.

2. Wrong not, and ye shall not be wronged.

3. Do not follow up one look at a woman with another; for verily the first look may be excusable but the next is unlawful.

4. The punishment of the God of compassion is a reward also.

5. We believe in what hath been sent down to us and hath been sent down to you. Our God and your God is one, and to Him are we self-surrendered.

6. He needs no other rosary whose thread of life is strung with the beads of love, service, charity and renunciation.

7. Righteousness is not that you turn your faces towards the

east or the west, but a righteous man is one who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the prophets, who does charity to the poor and who is steadfast in prayer.

8. To Allah belongs the kingdom of heaven and the earth. He giveth life and He causeth to die. Apart from Allah ye have neither friend nor helper.

9. Happy now the believers who humble themselves in their prayer and who keep aloof from vain words, who do charitable acts and who restrain their appetites.

10. Forgive thy servant seventy times a day.

11. Serve ye none but God. Show kindness to your parents, to orphans and the poor. Be steadfast in prayer. Give alms.

12. God is the first and the last, the seen and the hidden. He knoweth all things. Wherever you are, He is with you. He sees all your actions.

13. Your God is one God; there is no God but He, the merciful, the compassionate.

14. God is the light of the heavens and the earth. His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, and the lamp is in a glass and the glass is as though it were a glittering star.

15. God is the patron of them who believe. He brings them forth from darkness to light.

16. God is witness enough between me and you. Verily, He is well aware of His servants and sees.

17. God it is who has made for you the night to repose therein and the day to see by. Verily, God is the Lord of Grace to man, but most men give no thanks.

18. Generosity consists in doing justice and not demanding justice.

19. Look at your own heart, for the Kingdom of God is within you.

20. Verily we are God's and verily to Him do we return.

21. Do good, because God loveth those who do good.

JAINISM

1. Surely, dispassion and the disappearance of attachment constitute non-injury. Their appearance is injury. This is the summary of the Jain scriptures.

2. The five vows of Jainism are: to refrain from taking life, falsehood, stealing, sexual intercourse and all worldly passions.

3. Control anger by forgiveness, vanity by humility, fraud by straightforwardness and greed by contentment.

4. Do not kill living beings in any of the three ways: by thought, word or deed.

5. One becomes a monk by equanimity, a Brahmana by celibacy, a sage by wisdom and a hermit by penance.

6. Six essential duties have been prescribed for a saint, namely, repentance, renunciation, praising the Lord, obeisance to the Lord, practising equanimity and relinquishment of attachment to the body.

7. Right belief, right knowledge and right conduct—these together constitute the path to final emancipation.

8. By right knowledge one knows the right things, by faith one believes in them, by right conduct one checks the influx of actions, and by penance one becomes pure.

9. Harmlessness is the only religion.

10. One must worship God, serve the Guru, study the scriptures, control the senses, perform austerities and give alms.

11. Attachment and aversion are caused by actions. Action has its origin in delusion. Action is the root of birth and death. Birth and death are miseries.

12. Just as when a seed is completely burnt no sprout comes

forth, so also when the seed in the form of action is burnt, there is no more worldly existence.

13. Again and again it should be reflected, considered attentively and pondered that everything is transitory and subject to change. Attachment to things should be abandoned.

14. He is a Brahmana who practises penance, observes vows and has perfect peace of mind.

15. There is no escape from the effect of one's actions. Every deed will bear its fruit.

16. Right belief, knowledge and right conduct are the source of happiness.

17. Gambling, meat-eating, drinking wine, bribery, debauchery, adultery, hunting, thieving—these seven things in the world lead to hell.

18. Those who wish to avoid injury should renounce wine and flesh and control anger.

19. Not to injure is the first of virtues.

20. The slave to his lust has forfeited human life and divine life.

21. Birth is misery, old age is misery, and so are disease and death. Ah! Nothing but misery is the earthly life in which men suffer distress.

22. Wisdom recognises the truth of the law.

23. One should respect the vow of truthfulness by always avoiding jesting, greed, cowardice and anger, and by thinking before speaking.

24. Religion is the highest of all blessings. It comprises of non-injury, self-control and austerities. Even the gods bow down to him whose mind is always centred in religion.

SIKHISM

1. By hearing the Name of God a blind man finds his way. By hearing the Name of God the unfathomable becomes fathomable.

2. Covetousness is a dog; falsehood a sweeper; food obtained by deceit is a carrion.
3. All fear has departed from those who meditate on the fearless God.
4. Eat little, sleep little, have love, mercy and forbearance.
5. God will not ask man of what race he is. He will ask what he has done.
6. Devotion is not in ragged garments, nor staff, nor ashes, nor shaven head, nor sounding horns.
7. Of all devotion the best is to utter the Name of God.
8. Make thy body the field, good works the seed, and irrigate it with God's Name. Make thy heart the cultivator. God will germinate in thy heart, and thou shalt obtain the glory of final liberation.
9. The highest duty of all is to repeat the Name of God.
10. The Lord should always be remembered. Put Him and keep Him within thy heart.
11. Thou shalt not go to the heavens by lip-service. It is by the practice of truth that thou shalt be delivered.
12. Worldly goods last for a little while. Everyone goes and leaves them behind. Nothing is taken. Collect such things that do not perish.
13. Repeat the Name of God. The impurities of your heart will vanish.
14. Make the Word the garden tree, plant It in good soil (the heart) and irrigate It with love.
15. There is no greater penance than patience, no greater happiness than contentment, no greater evil than greed, no greater virtue than mercy, and no more potent weapon than forgiveness.
16. Without service of saints, man is a barren rock. In the service of saints he is God.
17. Make mercy thy cotton, contentment thy thread, continence its knot, truth its twist—that would make a thread for the soul. It will not break or become solid or be burnt or lost. Blessed is the

man, O Nanak, who goes with such a thread round his neck!

18. As fire is in all wood and butter in all milk, so the Light of God is in everything high and low.

19. He who looks for human support loses both this world and the next. There is but one giver. The whole world consists of beggars. They who forsake Him and attach themselves to others lose their honour.

20. There are four ways by which, with the repetition of God's Name, men may reach Him. The first is association with the holy persons, the second is truth, the third is contentment and the fourth is control of the senses. By whichever of these doors a man enters, whether he be a hermit or a householder, he shall find God.

21. Only he who has ceased to love the world can serve God.

22. Pain is medicine. Worldly pleasure is a disease. Where there is such pleasure, there is no desire for God.

CONFUCIANISM

1. The world is only a halting place.
2. To plan affairs rests with man; to complete affairs rests with God.
3. By controlling the anger of a moment you may avoid the remorse of a lifetime.
4. Blame yourself as you would blame others. Excuse others as you would excuse yourself.
5. Obedience is better than reverence.
6. Desires empty the heart, and not to desire refills it.
7. To walk in the path of virtue for twenty years is not enough. To do evil for a single day is too much.
8. A wise man will be slow to speak but quick to act.
9. Sincerity is the end and the beginning of things. Without sincerity there would be nothing. Sincerity is the way of God. It is

the way of heaven. Practise it wisely.

10. The three secrets of happiness are: to see no evil, hear no evil, and to do no evil.

11. The heart of a wise man should resemble a mirror, which reflects every object without being sullied by any one of them.

12. The heart of man is more dangerous than mountains and rivers, more difficult to understand than heaven itself,

13. Firmness and resolution, simplicity and gentleness of speech are qualities that make for perfect virtue.

14. He who does not know the Divine Law cannot become a noble man. He who does not know the laws of right conduct cannot form his character. He who does not know the force of words cannot know man.

15. The enlightened are free from doubt, the virtuous from anxiety and the brave from fear.

16. Of all the parts of a man's body there is none more excellent than the pupil of the eye. The pupil cannot be used to hide a man's wickedness. If within the heart all be correct, the pupil is bright. If within the heart all be not correct, the pupil is dull. Listen to a man's word and look at the pupil of his eyes. How can a man conceal his character?

17. True goodness is loving your fellowmen. True wisdom is knowing your fellowmen.

18. With coarse food to eat, water to drink and the bended arm as a pillow, the sage is the happiest man in this world.

19. Noise is not in the market place, nor quiet in the forest, but in the hearts of men.

20. Better do kind acts near home than walk a thousand miles to burn incense.

21. When you know, to know that you know, and when you do not know, to know that you do not know—that is true knowledge.

22. Sorrow and trouble bring life; ease and pleasure bring death.

(D) HINDU DHARMA

(SWAMI SIVANANDA)

1. WHO IS A HINDU

In a meeting of the Sanatana Dharma Sabha, Lokamanya Tilak said: "A Hindu is he who believes that the Vedas contain self-evident and axiomatic truths."

The Hindu Maha Sabha has given another definition: "A Hindu is one who believes in a religion which has originated in India."

"Those who burn the dead are Hindus." This is another definition given by some.

"He who protects the cows and the Brahmins is a Hindu." This is another definition given by some.

Some define: "A Hindu is one who regards India as his motherland and the most sacred spot on earth."

Some others define: "He who calls and considers himself a Hindu is a Hindu."

Some define: "He who accepts the Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas and the Tantras as the basis of religion and of the rule of conduct, and believes in one Supreme God (Brahman), in the Law of Karma or retributive justice, and in reincarnation (*Punarjanma*), is a Hindu."

"He who follows the Vedic or Sanatana-Dharma is a Hindu." This is the definition by some.

"He who is a follower of the Vedanta is a Hindu." This is another definition given by some others.

"He who has perfect faith in the Law of Karma, the law of reincarnation, *Avatara*, ancestor worship, *Varnashrama-Dharma*, *Vedas* and existence of God, he who practises the instructions given

in the Vedas with faith and earnestness, he who does *Sandhya*, *Sraddha*, *Pitri-Tarpana* and the *Pancha-Maha-Yajnas*, he who follows the Varnashrama-Dharmas, he who worships the Avatars and studies the Vedas, is a Hindu.” This is the definition given by some highly cultured men. This is the only correct and complete definition.

ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM

That part of the great Aryan race which migrated from Central Asia, through the mountain passes into India, settled first in the districts near the river Sindhu, now called the Indus, on the other side of the river. The Persians pronounced the word Sindhu as Hindu, and named their Aryan brethren Hindus. *Hindu* is only a corrupt form of *Sindhu*.

The Hindu Aryans spread themselves over the plains of the Ganga. Then the Persians gave the name Hindusthan, or abode of the Hindus, to the whole of those districts between Punjab and Benaras.*

The classical name for India which is used in Sanskrit literature is *Bharata-Varsha* or *Bharata-Khanda*, after the name of Bharata who ruled over a large extent of territory in days of yore. Manu’s name for the whole central region between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains is *Aryavarta*, Abode of the Aryans. Another name for the whole of India is *Jambu-Dvipa*. The Greeks gave the name Indu to the whole of this country. It was on account of this that *India* became popular as the name of this country throughout Europe.

Hindu is not a mere name. This name *Hindu* is not only of geographical, but also of national and racial importance. The whole history of our nation from the very beginning is bound up with it. All

* Latest historical researches have now proved that the Aryans did not come from outside India, but were the original inhabitants of India.

our ideas and ideals are so intimately connected with it that it is

difficult to give a simple definition of it. Poets, prophets and Avatars came to sing the praises and glory of this name. Rishis, sages and saints took their birth to compile the *Sastras* and *Darsanas* for this nation. Heroes and warriors have fought for its honour and laid down their very lives for it. Piety, nobility, generosity, philosophy, religious bent of mind, Yoga, religious tolerance, wisdom, devotion, renunciation, Self-realisation, Ahimsa, Satya and purity are associated with the name ‘Hindu’.

2. WHAT IS DHARMA

Silent adorations to the Lord, the Embodiment of Dharma, the Controller and Protector of Dharma and the Fountain-head of Dharma.

What is Dharma? Dharma is so called, because it *holds*: Dharma alone holds the people, etc. The word *Dharma* is derived from the root *Dhr*—to hold, — and its etymological meaning is ‘that which holds’ this world, or the people of the world, or the whole creation from the microcosm to the macrocosm. It is the eternal Divine Law of the Lord. The entire creation is held together and sustained by the All-powerful Law of God. Practice of Dharma, therefore, means recognition of this Law and abidance by it.

That which brings well-being to man is Dharma. Dharma supports this world. The people are upheld by Dharma. That which secures preservation of beings is Dharma. Dharma leads to eternal happiness and immortality.

That which is Dharma is verily the Truth. Therefore, whosoever speaks the truth is said to speak Dharma, and whosoever speaks Dharma is said to speak the truth. One and the same thing becomes both.

Dharma includes all external deeds, as well as thoughts and other mental practices which tend to elevate the character of man. Dharma comes from the Divine and leads you to the Divine.

DEFINITION OF DHARMA

No language is perfect. There is no proper equivalent word in English for the Sanskrit term *Dharma*. It is very difficult to define Dharma.

Dharma is generally defined as ‘righteousness’ or ‘duty.’ Dharma is the principle of righteousness. It is the principle of holiness. It is also the principle of unity. Bhishma says in his instructions to Yudhishtira that whatever creates conflict is Adharma, and whatever puts an end to conflict and brings about unity and harmony is Dharma. Anything that helps to unite all and develop pure divine love and universal brotherhood, is Dharma. Anything that creates discord, split and disharmony and foments hatred, is Adharma. Dharma is the cementer and sustainer of social life. The rules of Dharma have been laid down for regulating the worldly affairs of men. Dharma brings as its consequence happiness, both in this world and in the next. Dharma is the means of preserving one’s self. If you transgress it, it will kill you. If you protect it, it will protect you. It is your sole companion after death. It is the sole refuge of humanity.

That which elevates one is Dharma. This is another definition. Dharma is that which leads you to the path of perfection and glory. Dharma is that which helps you to have direct communion with the Lord. Dharma is that which makes you divine. Dharma is the ascending stairway unto God. Self-realisation is the highest Dharma. Dharma is the heart of Hindu ethics. God is the centre of Dharma.

Dharma means *Achara* or the regulation of daily life. Achara is the supreme Dharma. It is the basis of Tapas or austerity. It leads to wealth, beauty, longevity and continuity of lineage. Evil conduct and immorality will lead to ill-fame, sorrow, disease and premature death. Dharma has its root in morality and the controller of Dharma is God Himself.

Maharshi Jaimini defines Dharma as that which is enjoined by the Vedas and is not ultimately productive of suffering.

Rishi Kanada, founder of the Vaisheshika system of philosophy, has given the best definition of Dharma, in his Vaisheshika Sutras: “*Yato-bhyudayanihsreyasa-siddhah sa dharmah.*” “That which leads to the attainment of *Abhyudaya* (prosperity in this world) and *Nihisreyasa* (total cessation of pain and attainment of eternal bliss hereafter) is Dharma.”

THE SOLE AUTHORITY OF THE VEDAS

The four Vedas, the Smriti texts, the behaviour of those who have entered into their spirit and act according to their injunctions, the conduct of holy men and satisfaction of one’s own self—these are the bases of Dharma, according to Manu.

In the matter of Dharma, the Vedas are the ultimate authority. You cannot know the truth about Dharma through any source of knowledge other than the Vedas. Reason cannot be the authority in the matter of Dharma. Among the scriptures of the world, the Vedas are the oldest. This is supported by all leading scholars and antiquarians of the entire civilised world. They all declare with one voice, that of all books so far written in any human language, the Rig-Veda Samhita is undoubtedly the oldest. No antiquarian has been able to fix the date when the Rig-Veda Samhita was composed or came to light.

THE CHANGING DHARMA

Just as a doctor prescribes different medicines for different people according to their constitution and the nature of their disease, so also Hinduism prescribes different duties for different people. Rules for women are different from the rules for men. The rules for different Varnas and Asramas vary. But, non-violence, truth, non-stealing, cleanliness and control of the senses, are the duties common to all men.

Dharma depends upon time, circumstances, age, degree of

evolution and the community to which one belongs. The Dharma of this century is different from that of the tenth century.

There are conditions under which Dharma may change its usual course. Apad-Dharma is such a deviation from the usual practice. This is allowed only in times of extreme distress or calamity.

What is Dharma in one set of circumstances becomes Adharma in another set of circumstances. That is the reason why it is said that the secret of Dharma is extremely profound and subtle. Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "Let the scriptures be the authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done" (Ch. XVI, 24). The truth of Dharma lies hidden. Srutis and Smritis are many. The way of Dharma open to all is that which a great realised soul has traversed.

DHARMA IN OTHER RELIGIONS

All other religions also lay stress on Dharma. Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam are all remarkably alive to its value. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Kant, Swedenborg and Spinoza are all striking examples in the interesting history of Western philosophy for the high pedestal on which they have placed morality, duty and righteousness, and adored them all as the only means to the attainment of the goal of life. Each religion lays greater stress on certain aspects of Dharma.

BENEFITS OF THE PRACTICE OF DHARMA

Of the four grand objects of human aspiration — *Purusharthas* — , viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, *Dharma* is given the foremost rank in the scriptures. Dharma alone is the gateway to Moksha, to immortality, infinite bliss, supreme peace and highest knowledge. Dharma alone is the primary *Purushartha*. Dharma is the first and foremost *Purushartha*. Through the practice of Dharma alone can you ever hope to achieve the crowning glory of all human endeavours, viz., Moksha which is the best and the highest of all desirable things.

Practice of Dharma leads to the perfect realisation of essential unity or the final end, the highest good, namely, Moksha. The practitioner experiences peace, joy, strength and tranquillity within himself. His life becomes thoroughly disciplined. His powers and capacities are exceedingly intensified. He realises that there is one underlying homogeneous essence, a living truth, behind these names and forms. He is transmuted into divinity. His whole nature gets transformed. He becomes one with the Eternal. He beholds Brahman above, Brahman below, Brahman to the right, Brahman to the left, Brahman in front, Brahman at the back, Brahman within, Brahman without and Brahman pervading the whole world.

KINDS OF DHARMA

Dharma can be classified under two heads: (i) *Samanya* or the general, universal Dharma and (ii) *Visesha* or the specific, personal Dharma. Contentment, forgiveness, self-restraint, non-stealing, purity, control of senses, discrimination between right and wrong, between the real and the unreal, spiritual knowledge, truthfulness and absence of anger come under the general or universal Dharma. The rules of the castes and orders of life are specific Dharmas. These are the tenfold characteristics of Dharma according to Manu.

Dharma assumes various kinds: Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Law), Samanya Dharma (general duty), Visesha Dharma (special duty), Varnasrama Dharma (duties of Caste and Order), Svadharma (one's own duty), Yuga Dharma (duty of the Age), Kula Dharma (duty of family), Manava Dharma (duty of man), Purusha Dharma (duty of male), Stri Dharma (duty of female), Raja Dharma (duty of king), Praja Dharma (duty of subjects), Pravritti Dharma (duty in worldly life) and Nivritti Dharma (duty in spiritual life).

SANATANA DHARMA

Sanatana Dharma means the Eternal Religion, the Ancient Law. This is based on the Vedas. This is the oldest of living religions.

Hinduism is known by the name Sanatana Dharma. What the Vedas alone declare to be the means of attaining the *summum bonum* or the final emancipation, is the Sanatana Dharma or Hindu Dharma.

The foundation of Sanatana Dharma is Sruti; Smritis are the walls; the Itihasas and Puranas are the buttresses or supports. In ancient times, the Srutis were learnt by heart. The teacher sang them to his pupils and the pupils sang them after him. They were not written in book form. All the sects, all the philosophical systems, appeal to the Sruti as the final authority. The Smriti stands next in authority to the Sruti.

Hinduism stands unrivalled in the depth and grandeur of its philosophy. Its ethical teachings are lofty, unique and sublime. It is highly flexible and adapted to every human need. It is a perfect religion by itself. It is not in need of anything from any other religion. No other religion has produced so many great saints, great patriots, great warriors and great Pativratas. The more you know of it, the more you will honour and love it. The more you study it, the more it will enlighten you and satisfy your heart.

INDIA — THE HOME OF RELIGIONS

The religious history of the world tells us that from time immemorial, India has been the home of great sages, seers and Rishis. All the grand religious ideals that have moulded the character of men, the loftiest of ethics and morality that have raised human beings to magnanimous heights of divine splendour and all the sublime truths of spirituality that have made men divine and have moulded the spiritual ideals of nations and saviours of mankind, first arose in India. The spiritual horizon of India has always been illumined with the glory of the self-effulgent sun of wisdom of the Upanishads. Whenever there was any upheaval in any part of the world, the origin of this could be traced to the wave of spirituality caused by the birth of a great soul — a special manifestation of Divinity — in some part of India.

Hindus have had a culture, civilisation and religion millennia older than those of any other country or people. God did speak to the world through India's Rishis, Yogins, Mahatmas, Alvars, prophets, Acharyas, Sannyasins and saints. Their teachings and Puranas are really inspired. God is the one Light and Truth from whom emanate the teachings of all faiths.

India is the home and abode of religions. It occupies the proud first place in religious devotion and godliness. It is famous for its Yogins and saints. The goal of India is Self-realisation or attainment of God-consciousness, through renunciation. The history of India is a history of religion. Its social code and regulations are founded upon religion. Minus its Yoga, religion and its regulations, India will not be what it has been for millennia. Some Hindus are still not aware of the distinguishing features of Sanatana Dharma. If every Hindu knew and understood what Hinduism is, the Hindus of today would all be gods on this earth.

May you all be endowed with the knowledge of Sanatana Dharma! May you all endeavour to protect the Eternal Dharma! May the secrets of Sanatana Dharma be revealed unto you all, like a fruit in the palm of your hand, through the Grace of the Lord! May the blessings of Rishis be upon you all! Glory to the Vedas and Sanatana Dharma! Glory to Brahman, the source for all Vedas and Sanatana Dharma!

SAMANYA DHARMA

Every religion has a generic form or *Samanya-Rupa* and a specific form or *Visesha-Rupa*. The general form remains eternally the same. It is never changed by any circumstance whatsoever. It is not affected at all by changes of time, place, surroundings and individual differences. This aspect of religion is called Sanatana or eternal. That which changes according to the change of time, place and surrounding circumstances is the external aspect or ritual, of Dharma.

Samanya Dharma is the general Dharma or law for all men. Varnasrama Dharmas are special Dharmas which are to be practised by particular castes and by men in particular stages of life. The Samanya Dharmas must be practised by all, irrespective of distinctions of Varna and Asrama, creed or colour. Goodness is not the property of any one class, creed, sect or community. Every man should possess this virtue.

FUNDAMENTALS OF DHARMA

THE VISHNU SAMHITA enumerates forgiveness, truthfulness, control of the mind, purity, practice of charity, control of the senses, non-violence, service of the Guru, visiting places of pilgrimage, compassion, simplicity, absence of greed, worship of the gods and the Brahmanas, and absence of malice as the ingredients of Samanya Dharma, the general law for all men.

THE MAHABHARATA enumerates the performance of Sraddha or offering oblations to the forefathers, religious austerity, truth, restraint of anger, satisfaction with one's own wife, purity, learning, absence of envy, knowledge of the Self and forbearance as the fundamentals of Dharma.

It is said in PADMA PURANA that Dharma proceeds from continence, truthfulness, austerity, charity, self-control, forbearance, purity, non-violence, serenity and non-thieving and that one should recognise Dharma by these ten factors. According to this Purana, bestowing gifts on deserving persons, fixing one's thoughts on Lord Krishna, adoration of one's parents, offering a portion of the daily meal to all creatures and giving a morsel of food to a cow are the characteristics of Dharma.

According to MATSYA PURANA, freedom from malice, absence of covetousness, control of the senses, austerity, celibacy, compassion, truthfulness, forbearance and fortitude constitute the fundamentals of Sanatana Dharma.

PATANJALI MAHARSHI, the exponent of Raja Yoga

philosophy, recommends that ten virtues should be practised by all men. The first five are: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Brahmacharya (celibacy in thought, word and deed), Asteya (non-stealing) and Aparigraha (non-covetousness). These constitute Yama or self-restraint. The other five virtues are: Saucha (internal and external purity), Santosha (contentment), Tapas (austerity), Svadhyaya (study of scriptures or recitation of Mantra) and Isvara-pranidhana (consecration of the fruits of all works to the Lord). These constitute Niyama or religious observance.

THE GITA enumerates the following virtues as Daivi-Sampat or divine qualities: fearlessness, cleanness of life, steadfastness in the Yoga of Wisdom, alms-giving, self-restraint, sacrifice, study of the scriptures, austerity, straightforwardness, harmlessness, truth, absence of wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, absence of crookedness, compassion to living beings, non-covetousness, mildness, modesty, absence of fickleness, vigour, forgiveness, fortitude, purity and absence of envy and pride. All these virtues are manifestations of the four fundamental virtues: (i) non-violence, (ii) truth, (iii) purity and (iv) self-control. All the above virtues come under the above four cardinal virtues. The virtues that are enumerated under the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism and the virtues prescribed by Lord Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, also come under the above fundamental virtues.

The development of the divine qualities is indispensable for the attainment of Self-realisation. Brahman or the Eternal is purity. The Eternal cannot be attained without the attainment of purity. Brahman is truth. The Eternal cannot be attained without practising truth. Brahman is fearlessness. The Eternal cannot be attained unless you become absolutely fearless. Attachment to the body causes fear and Dehadhyasa. If only you become fearless, then the identification with the body will vanish.

You have rendered the heart harder than flint, steel or diamond through greed, miserliness, harshness and rudeness. You

can soften it only through the practice of mercy, sympathy, charity, generosity, magnanimity, harmlessness, mildness, disinterested action and untiring service of the poor. You have made the heart crooked and narrow through hypocrisy, untruthfulness, backbiting and talebearing. You can expand it through the practice of straightforwardness, truthfulness, cleanness of life, alms-giving and non-covetousness. You have rendered the heart impure through lust. You can purify it through the practice of celibacy in thought, word and deed.

NON-VIOLENCE

Ahimsa or non-violence is the most important virtue. That is the reason why Patanjali Maharshi has placed it first in Yama. Practice of Ahimsa must be in thought, word and deed. Practice of Ahimsa is not impotence or cowardice or weakness. It is the highest type of heroism. The practice demands immense patience, forbearance and endurance, infinite inner spiritual strength and gigantic will-power.

Ahimsa is a modification or expression of truth only. Satyam and Ahimsa always go together. He who is established in Ahimsa can move the whole world. In his presence, all hostilities vanish; lion and cow, cobra and mongoose, live together peacefully.

Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism lay great stress on Ahimsa. Lord Jesus also has emphasised much on Ahimsa in his Sermon on the Mount. He says: "If anyone beats you on one cheek, show him the other cheek also."

He who is firmly established in Ahimsa can hope to attain Self-realisation. He who practises Ahimsa develops cosmic love to a maximum degree. Practice of Ahimsa eventually leads to realisation of oneness or unity of Self. Such a man only can attain self-restraint. Retaliation — tooth for tooth, blow for blow — is the maxim, doctrine or principle of an Asura or a man of diabolic nature. This belongs to the beastly nature. To return good for evil is divine. Constant vigilance

and alertness are needed in the practice of Ahimsa. If you are careless even a bit, you will be carried away by the force of previous wrong Samskaras and impulses and will become a victim of Himsa, despite your good intentions.

TRUTH

Brahman is Sat or Existence-Absolute. Truth must be observed in thought, word and deed. If you are established in truth, all other virtues will cling to you by themselves. Harischandra sacrificed everything for the sake of truth. He lives still in our hearts. Yudhishtira was also devoted to truth. There is no virtue higher than truth. Practice of truth and Ahimsa constitute the crown and glory of ethical life. In the Taittiriya Upanishad, the preceptor says in his convocation address to the students: "*Satyam vada* — Speak the truth." The world is rooted in truth. Dharma is rooted in truth. All religions are rooted in truth. Honesty, justice, straightforwardness and sincerity are only modifications or expressions of truth.

PURITY

Purity comprises both external purity and internal purity. Purity implies both purity of body and purity of mind. Purity of body is only the preliminary to purity of mind.

This body is the temple of God. It should be kept clean by daily bathing and clean dress. Cleanliness is a part of godliness.

The restriction in diet is best calculated to make the mind pure. Food exercises a direct influence on the mind. Sattvic food makes the mind pure. Purity of food leads to purity of mind. Mind is only made up of the fine essence of food. As the food is, so is the mind.

You must be pure in thought, word and deed. Your heart must be as pure as crystal or the Himalayan snow. Then only the divine light will descend. Purity comprises such virtues as frankness, innocence, straightforwardness and absence of all evil thoughts. He

who is endowed with purity will find it easy to tread the spiritual path.

SELF-CONTROL

You must have perfect self-control or self-mastery. Self-control implies both control of the body and control of the mind. Self-control does not mean self-torture. You must lead a well-regulated and disciplined life. You must keep all the senses under your perfect control. The senses are like turbulent and wild horses. This body is like a chariot. Mind is the reins. Intellect is the driver. The Atman is the Lord of the chariot. If the senses are not kept under proper control, they will throw this chariot into a deep abyss. You will come to ruin. He who keeps the reins firm and drives this chariot intelligently by controlling the horses (senses), will reach the destination (Moksha or the Abode of Eternal Bliss) safely.

Self-control implies self-sacrifice, annihilation of egoism, patience, endurance, forbearance and humility. Overcome Raga or attachment by Vairagya or dispassion. Dispassion will dawn in your mind if you look into the defects of sensual life such as birth, death, disease, old age, pain, sorrow, etc. (Mithya-Drishti and Dosha-Drishti). Overcome anger and hatred by Kshama or forgiveness, love and selfless service. Overcome evil by good. Return good for evil. Overcome lust by the practice of Brahmacharya and regular Japa and meditation. Conquer greed by charity, generosity and disinterested actions. Conquer pride by humility and delusion by discrimination and enquiry. Overcome jealousy by magnanimity, Atma-bhava and nobility. Conquer egoism by self-sacrifice, self-surrender, self-abnegation and meditation on the non-dual, eternal, self-luminous Brahman, the innermost Self, the Inner Ruler, the Immortal.

May you all attain eternal bliss and immortality through the practice of the cardinal virtues or the fundamental Dharma.

VARNASRAMA DHARMA

The principle of Varnasrama Dharma is one of the basic principles of Hinduism. The Varnasrama system is peculiar to Hindus. It is a characteristic feature of Hinduism. It is also prevalent throughout the world according to Guna-Karma (aptitude and conduct), though there is no such distinct denomination of this kind, elsewhere.

The duties of the castes are Varna Dharma. The four castes are Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. The duties of the stages in life are Asrama Dharma. The four Asramas or orders of life are Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa.

THE PRINCIPLE

Human society is like a huge machine. The individuals and communities are like its parts. If the parts are weak and broken, the machine will not work. A machine is nothing without its parts. The human body also can work efficiently if its parts and organs are in sound and strong condition. If there is pain in any part of the body, if there is disease in any organ or part of the body, this human machine will go out of order. It will not perform its usual function or work.

So is the case with the human society. Every individual should perform his duties efficiently. The Hindu Rishis and sages formed an ideal scheme of society and an ideal way of individual life, which is known by the name Varnasrama Dharma. Hinduism is built on Varnasrama Dharma. The structure of the Hindu society is based on Varnasrama Dharma. Observance of Varnasrama Dharma helps one's growth and self-evolution. It is very indispensable. If the rules are violated, the society will soon perish.

The aim of Varnasrama Dharma is to promote the development of the universal, eternal Dharma. If you defend Dharma, it will defend you. If you destroy it, it will destroy you.

Therefore, never destroy your Dharma. This principle holds true of the individual as much as of the nation. It is Dharma alone which keeps a nation alive. Dharma is the very soul of man. Dharma is the very soul of a nation also.

In the West and in the whole world also, there is Varnasrama, though it is not rigidly observed there. Some Western philosophers have made a division of three classes, viz., philosophers, warriors and masses. The philosophers correspond to the Brahmanas, warriors to Kshatriyas and the masses to Vaisyas and Sudras. This system is indispensable to keep the society in a state of perfect harmony and order.

THE FOUR CASTES

In Purusha-Sukta of the Rig-Veda, there is reference to the division of Hindu society into four classes. It is described there that the Brahmanas came out of the face of the Lord, the Creator, Kshatriyas from His arms, Vaisyas from His thighs, and the Sudras from His feet.

This division is according to the Guna and Karma. Guna (quality) and Karma (kind of work) determine the caste of a man. This is supported by Lord Krishna in the Gita, also. He says in the Gita: “The four castes were emanated by Me, by the different distribution of qualities and actions. Know Me to be the author of them, though the actionless and inexhaustible” (Ch. IV-13).

There are three qualities or Gunas, viz., *Sattva* (purity), *Rajas* (passion) and *Tamas* (inertia). *Sattva* is white, *Rajas* is red and *Tamas* is black. These three qualities are found in man in varying proportions. *Sattva* preponderates in some persons. They are Brahmanas. They are wise persons or thinkers. They are the priests, ministers or philosophers who guide kings or rulers. In some, *Rajas* is predominant. They are Kshatriyas. They are warriors or men of action. They fight with the enemies or invaders and defend the

country. In some, *Tamas* is predominant. They are Vaisyas or traders. They do business and agriculture and amass wealth. Sudras are the servants. None of these qualities is highly developed in them. They serve the other three castes.

In a broad sense, a Sattvic man, who is pious and virtuous and leads the divine life, is a Brahmana, a Rajasic man with heroic quality is a Kshatriya, a Rajasic man with business tendencies is a Vaisya and a Tamasic man is a Sudra. Hitler and Mussolini were Kshatriyas. Ford was a Vaisya.

Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, and also, uprightness, knowledge, Realisation and belief in God are the duties of the Brahmanas, born of (their own) nature. Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity, and also, not flying from battle, generosity and lordliness are the duties of the Kshatriyas, born of (their own) nature. Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaisyas, born of (their own) nature. And action consisting of service is the duty of the Sudras, born of (their own) nature.

THE LAW OF SPIRITUAL ECONOMICS

The underlying principle in caste system or Varna Dharma, is division of labour. Rishis studied human nature carefully. They came to the conclusion that all men were not equally fit for all kinds of work. Hence, they found it necessary to allocate different kinds of duties to different classes of people, according to their aptitude, capacity or quality. The Brahmanas were in charge of spiritual and intellectual affairs. The work of political administration and defence was given to the Kshatriyas. The Vaisyas were entrusted with the duty of supplying food for the nation and administering its economic welfare. The Sudras did menial work. The Rishis felt all these needs of the Hindu nation and started the system of Varnas and Asramas.

This division of labour began in Vedic times. The Vedas taught that the Brahmana was the brain of the society, the Kshatriya its arms, the Vaisya its stomach, and the Sudra its feet.

There was a quarrel between the senses, the mind and the Prana as to who was superior. There was a quarrel amongst the different organs and the stomach. If the hands quarrel with the stomach; the entire body will suffer. When Prana departed from the body, all the organs suffered. The head or stomach cannot claim its superiority over the feet and hands. The hands and feet are as much important as the stomach or head. If there is quarrel between the different castes as to which is superior, then the entire social fabric will suffer. There will be disharmony, rupture and discord. A scavenger and a barber are as much important as a minister for the running of the society. The social edifice is built on the law of spiritual economics. It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. Each class contributes its best to the common weal or world-solidarity. There is no question of higher and lower here.

CHARACTER DETERMINES CASTE

A Brahmana is no Brahmana if he is not endowed with purity and good character, and if he leads a life of dissipation and immorality. A Sudra is a Brahmana if he leads a virtuous and pious life. What a great soul was Vidura! What a noble, candid, straightforward student was Satyakama Jabala of Chhandogya Upanishad! Caste is a question of character. Varna is no more the colour of the skin, but the colour of one's character or quality. Conduct and character count and not lineage alone. If one is Brahmana by birth and, at the same time, if he possesses the virtues of a Brahmana, it is extremely good, because certain virtuous qualifications only determine the birth of a Brahmana.

USE AND ABUSE OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

The Hindus have survived many a foreign conquest on account of their caste system. But they have developed class jealousies and hatred in the name of the caste system. They have not got the spirit of co-operation. That is the reason why they are weak and disunited today. They have become sectarians in the name

of the caste system. Hence there is degradation in India.

The caste system is, indeed, a splendid thing. It is quite flawless. But the defect came in from somewhere else. The classes gradually neglected their duties. The test of ability and character slowly vanished. Birth became the chief consideration in determining castes. All castes fell from their ideals and forgot all about their duties. Brahmanas became selfish and claimed superiority over others by mere birth, without possessing due qualifications. The Kshatriyas lost their chivalry and spirit of sacrifice. The Vaisyas became very greedy. They did not earn wealth by honest means. They did not look after the economic welfare of the people. They did not give charity. They also lost the spirit of sacrifice. Sudras gave up service. They became officers. They wished that others should serve them. The greed and pride of man have created discord and disharmony.

There is nothing wrong in Varnasrama. It is arrogance and haughtiness in men that have brought troubles. Man or the little Jiva is imperfect. He is full of defects. He is simply waiting for claiming superiority over others. The Brahmana thinks that the other three castes are inferior to him. The Kshatriya thinks that the Vaisya and Sudra are inferior to him. A rich Sudra thinks that he is superior to a poor Brahmana or a poor Kshatriya or Vaisya.

At the present moment, the Varnasrama system exists in name only. It has to be rebuilt properly. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras, who have fallen from their ideals and who are not doing their respective duties, must do their respective duties properly. They must be educated on right lines. They must raise themselves to their original lofty level. The sectarian spirit must die. They should develop a new understanding heart of love and devotion, with a spirit of co-operation, sacrifice and service.

THE FOUR ASRAMAS

There are four Asramas or stages in life, viz., Brahmacharya

or the period of studentship, Grihastha or the stage of the householder, Vanaprastha or the stage of the forest-dweller or hermit, and Sannyasa or the life of renunciation or asceticism. Each stage has its own duties. These stages help the evolution of man. The four Asramas take man to perfection by successive stages. The practice of the four Asramas regulates the life from the beginning to the end. The first two Asramas pertain to Pravritti Marga or the path of work and the two later stages — the life of Vanaprastha and that of Sannyasa — are the stages of withdrawal from the world. They pertain to Nivritti Marga or the path of renunciation.

TOWARDS ORDERLY SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

Life is very systematically and orderly arranged in Sanatana Dharma. There is opportunity for the development of the different sides of human activity. Due occupations and training are assigned to each period of life. Life is a great school in which the powers, capacities and faculties of man are to be evolved gradually.

Every man should pass through the different Asramas regularly. He should not enter any stage of life prematurely. He can enter the next stage, only when each has been completed. In nature, evolution is gradual. It is not revolutionary.

Lord Manu says in his Smriti: “Having studied the Vedas or two Vedas or even one Veda in due order without breaking celibacy, let him dwell in the householder order. When the householder sees wrinkles in his skin and whiteness in his hair and the son of his son, then let him retire to the forest. Having passed the third portion of life in the forests, let him, having abandoned attachments, wander as an ascetic in the fourth portion of life.”

In extraordinary cases, however, some of the stages may be omitted. Suka was a born Sannyasin. Sankara took Sannyasa without entering the stage of a householder. In rare and exceptional cases, a student is allowed to become a Sannyasin, his debts to the world having been fully paid in a previous birth. Nowadays, young

Sannyasins without qualification are found in abundance. This is contrary to the ancient rules and causes much trouble.

THE BRAHMACHARIN OR THE CELIBATE STUDENT

The first stage, Brahmacharya, is the period of study and discipline. The student should not indulge in any pleasures. He stays in the house of his preceptor and studies the Vedas and the sciences. This is the period of probation. The teachers in ancient India usually lived in forest hermitages. These hermitages were the Gurukulas or forest universities. The student begged his food. The children of the rich and poor lived together. The student regarded his teacher as his spiritual father and served him with faith, devotion and reverence.

The life of the student begins with the Upanayana ceremony, his second birth. He must be hardy and simple in his habits. He rises early, bathes and does Sandhya and Gayatri Japa. He studies scriptures. He takes simple food in moderation and takes plenty of exercise. He sleeps on a hard mat and does not use soft beds and pillows. He is humble and obedient. He serves and respects elders. He attempts to be chaste in thought, word and deed.

He ever engages himself in doing services to his preceptor. He refrains from wine, meat, perfumes, garlands, tasty and savoury dishes, women, acids, spices and injury to sentient creatures; from lust, anger, greed; dancing, singing and playing on musical instruments; from dice-playing, gossip, slander and untruth. He sleeps alone.

After the end of his student career, he gives a present to his preceptor according to his ability and returns home to enter the household life. The preceptor gives the final instruction and sends the student home. The teacher delivers a convocation address to the students at the conclusion of their studentship:

“Speak the truth. Do your duty. Never swerve from the study of the Veda. Do not cut off the line of progeny (after giving the preceptor the fee he desires). Never swerve away from truth. Never swerve from duty. Never neglect your welfare. Never neglect your

prosperity. Never neglect the study and the teaching of the Vedas.

“Never swerve from the duties to the gods and the forefathers. Regard your mother as a god (*Matridevo Bhava*). Regard your father as a god (*Pitrivevo Bhava*). Regard your teacher as a god (*Acharyadevo Bhava*). Regard your guest as god (*Atithidevo Bhava*). Let only those actions that are free from blemishes be done and not others. Only those that are good acts to us should be performed by you and not others.

“You should remove the fatigue of Brahmanas who are superior to you by serving them with seats, etc. Gift should be given with faith, in plenty, with modesty and sympathy. If there be any doubt regarding rites or conduct, then look up to the lives of great men and follow their examples. This is the injunction. This is the teaching. This is the secret of the Vedas. This is God’s word of command. This should be observed. Thus is this to be meditated upon.”

THE GRIHASTHA OR THE HOUSEHOLDER

The second stage is that of the Grihastha or householder. The household stage is entered at marriage, when the student has completed his studentship and is ready to take up the duties and responsibilities of householder life. Of all the Asramas, this is the most important, because it supports all the others. As all creatures live supported by the air, so the other Orders exist supported by the householder. As all streams and rivers flow to rest in the ocean, so all the Asramas flow to rest in the householder. The Grihastha is the very heart of Aryan life. Everything depends on him.

Marriage is a sacrament for a Hindu. The wife is his partner in life. She is his Ardhangini. He cannot do any religious ritual without her. She stands by his left side when he performs any religious performance. Husband and wife keep Rama and Sita as their ideal.

A householder should earn money by honest means and distribute it in the proper manner. He should spend one-tenth of his

income in charity. He should enjoy sensual pleasures within the limits of the moral law. A householder is permitted to enjoy conjugal happiness on one night in a month.

The householder should perform the Pancha Maha Yajnas. The five Yajnas are:

DEVA-YAJNA : offering oblations unto Devas, with recitation of Vedic Mantras.

RISHI-YAJNA : study of Vedas and teaching of Vedas to students, and offering of oblations to Rishis.

PITRI-YAJNA : Tarpana or ablutions to departed souls and Sraddha or annual religious rites performed for departed souls.

BHUTA-YAJNA: distribution of food to cows, crows and animals in general.

ATITHI-YAJNA : giving food to guests and honouring them.

Hospitality is one of the householder’s chief duties. He must ever feed first his guests, Brahmanas and his relatives, and then he and his wife should eat.

When the householder sees that his sons are able to bear the burden of his duties, when his grandsons are around him, he should know that the time has come for him and his wife to retire from the world and spend their time in study and meditation.

THE VANAPRASTHA OR THE RECLUSE

The next stage is that of the Varnaprastha. Brahmacharya is a preparation for the life of the householder. Even so, Vanaprastha is a preparation for the final stage of Sannyasa. After discharging all the duties of a householder, he should retire to the forest or a solitary

country place and begin to meditate in solitude on higher spiritual things. He is now free from social bonds and the responsibilities of life. He has ample time for study of scriptures. His wife may go with him or remain with her sons.

THE SANNYASIN OR THE RENUNCIATE

The next stage is that of a Sannyasin. When a man becomes a Sannyasin, he renounces all possessions, all distinctions of caste, all rites and ceremonies and all attachments to any particular country, nation, or religion. He lives alone and spends his time in meditation. He lives on alms. When he attains the sublime state of deep meditation he rejoices in his own Self. He is quite indifferent to sensual pleasures. He is free from likes and dislikes, desires, egoism, lust, anger, greed and pride. He has equal vision and balanced mind. He loves all. He roams about happily and disseminates Brahma Jnana or Knowledge of the Self. He is the same in honour and dishonour, praise and censure, success and failure. He is now *Ativarnasrami*, i.e., above Varna and Asrama. He is quite a free man. He is not bound by any social customs and conventions.

Such a Sannyasin is an ideal man. He has attained perfection and freedom. He is Brahman Himself. He is a Jivanmukta or a liberated sage. Glory to such exalted personages who are living Gods on earth!

ASRAMA DHARMA UNDER MODERN CONDITIONS

At the present moment, the Asramas cannot be exactly lived according to the details of the ancient rules, as the conditions have changed very much; but, they may be revived in their spirit, to the great improvement of modern life. In these stages, no one should do the duty of another. The student or Brahmachari should not do

the duties of a householder, a recluse or a Sannyasin. The householder must not perform the duties of a Brahmacharin, Vanaprastha or a Sannyasin. A Sannyasin should not seek again the joys of the householder.

Peace and order will prevail in society, only if and when all people do their respective duties efficiently. The abolition of Varnas and Asramas will cut at the very root of social duties. How can the nation hope to live when Varnasrama Dharma is not rigidly practised?

The students of schools, and colleges should lead a life of purity and simple living. The householder should lead the life of an ideal Grihastha. He should practise self-restraint, mercy, tolerance, non-injury, truthfulness and moderation in everything. Those who find it difficult to lead the life of the third and the fourth Asramas should, remaining in either of the other two Asramas, gradually withdraw themselves from worldly life and practise selfless service, study and meditation.

THE HIGHEST STATE

Varnasrama pertains to body alone, but not to the pure, all-pervading, immortal soul or Atman. Attain Knowledge of the Self and become an *Ativarnasrami* like Lord Dattatreya. Hear what he says: —

*Mahadadi jagat sarvam
Na kinchit pratibhati me
Brahmaiva kevalam sarvam
Katham varnasramasthitih*

“The whole world, from Mahat downwards, does not shine in Me. Everything is Brahman only. Where then is Varnasrama?”

May you all have comprehensive understanding of Varnasrama Dharma! May you all develop universal love and brotherhood! May all barriers which are made by man for his own

self-aggrandisement and self-assertion and which create discord and disunion, be broken asunder!

YUGA DHARMA

In Satya-Yuga or the golden age there was a different set of Dharmas or laws; in Treta, they changed into another form; in Dvapara, the Dharmas were different from the Dharmas of other Yugas; and in Kali-Yuga, they assumed still another form. The Dharma changes according to the changes of the cycles. Man is undergoing change. His nature gets transformed through experiences. Hence, his external form of Dharmas also should change.

That which is achieved through contemplation in Satya Yuga, through sacrifices in Treta Yuga, and through the worship of Lord Hari in Dvapara Yuga, may be attained through Kirtana or loud chanting of Lord Vishnu's Name in Kali Yuga or Iron age.

In the Satya Yuga, the mind of men was generally pure. They had no distraction of the mind. There were neither cinemas, nor hotels, nor dancing halls and similar other distractions. Hence, meditation was easy and natural for them. That is the reason why contemplation has been prescribed for men of Satya Yuga. In the Treta Yuga, materials for the performance of Yajnas or sacrifices were easily available. The people had active tendencies. Therefore it was easy for them to perform Agnihotra, Jyotistoma, Darsa-Paurnimas and other Yajnas. That is the reason why Yajna has been described as the external form of Sanatana Dharma in that age. In the Dvapara Yuga, there was the manifestation of Avatars and men could easily have direct worship of God. Hence, worship was prescribed as the principal form of Sadhana in that age. In the Kali Yuga, there are many distractions for the mind. People lack in Brahmacharya, strength of will and power of enquiry or rational

investigation. It is very difficult to procure materials for the performance of sacrifices. Therefore, Hari Kirtana or loud chanting of the Divine Name and selfless service of humanity have been recommended as the principal forms of Sadhana.

CONCLUSION

Follow your Dharma with zeal and enthusiasm. Discharge your duties faithfully. Develop all the virtues which constitute Dharma. Never deviate an inch from the path of righteousness. Stick to Dharma with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul. Performance of one's duties brings happiness, quick evolution and freedom. You will soon attain immortality, eternal bliss, supreme peace, perennial joy, absolute freedom and perfection. Glory to Dharma, the supreme light that leads you to the kingdom of eternal bliss and everlasting peace.

May the eternal Dharma of Hinduism be preserved for ever!
May all Hindus be consolidated by the bond of true love!!

(E) DHARMA IS THE SPIRIT OF LIFE (SWAMI CHIDANANDA)

Dharma is duty, righteousness, a life of virtue, in the fulfilment of ethical standard in life. Dharma supports life. He who supports Dharma is supported by Dharma. When you follow a life of virtue it brings you face to face with God. Dharma leads to immortal bliss. Where there is Dharma there is success, there is joy and peace. Dharma is a very unique concept. It is the ideal — the life of idealism — that which ought to be, things as they ought to be, not things merely as they are and it is based upon sound science — not physical science, not material science but upon spiritual science. No one wants to be unhappy. Everyone wants to be happy. No one wants restlessness, fear, peacelessness, anxiety or worry. All want the experience of happiness. Everyone seeks peace. But very seldom people realise the absolute inseparable nature of these two factors. Very few people know or recognise that there is an inexplicable connection between these two factors. What is that connection? Happiness entirely depends upon peace. Peace is the cause of happiness. Without peace you cannot have happiness. Peace comes first. Happiness is its spontaneous result. When incense is burnt fragrance is felt. When flower unfolds fragrance is after it too. Happiness is the result of peace. You cannot have happiness without peace — inner peace, peace of mind. You can have peace without happiness because when you are perfectly in a state of peace you wouldn't think of happiness. Happiness or unhappiness will have no meaning to you, because peace in the ultimate analysis means supreme bliss. When you have a potful of honey you won't care for sweetness. So happiness becomes superfluous if you have true peace because the very essence of happiness is already in peace, just as in honey the very essence of sweetness is there. So, those who know say "Peace is the supreme goal" — supreme peace, not merely the

absence of noise or absence of clash but a positive state of experience, where even if there is noise and clash yet the peace is there that nothing can touch, nothing can distort or destroy. Therefore, they call it an extraordinary unique peace — a peace that cannot be understood by human beings, peace that passeth understanding. That peace can be there in the midst of trouble, tribulation, disappointments or vexations. People may hate you, all friends may abandon you, they may call you names, even persecute you, but yet you will be full of peace. This is the peculiar extraordinary peace that comes when you experience the deepest Self within because it is a peace that nothing can touch. It is that peace that some of the martyrs had. They said, "Our father forgive them for they know not what they do." And they were able to pray for those who were about to destroy them, because they were at peace with themselves and the Supreme. That peace passeth understanding. It is something which no power in the universe can affect, can change, can alter or can take away even one little bit, because it is the only Reality. It is a positive powerful state of experience — peace — and when that peace is there you are the Emperor of emperors. A billionaire is nothing for you. All the wealth of the whole universe is as dust before you if you have that peace. That peace is the goal — liberation, Nirvana, Illumination, Moksha, Transcendental experience. They all mean nothing but this great peace.

There is cessation of all desires — all delusion, no more restlessness, no more hankering, no more craving. You are full. You are in a state of overflowing divinity — peace. Supreme reality is profound peace and that peace is the supreme joy. It is the Bliss-absolute of the Upanishads — That is Brahman, that is the thing-in-itself. That is the supreme Tao which cannot be described, attaining which there is nothing higher to be obtained. One is in a state which nothing can equal and which is unvalued. That is possible only in a mind devoid of restlessness. Where there is restlessness of the mind due to desire, thoughts endless, ambitions, peculiar delusions, in that restless mind peace is far off. If you think: 'let me satisfy this desire,

then I think I will have a little peace', you are the greatest deluded being. There is no greater delusion. Satisfaction of desire will have only one result. It will intensify that desire, because desire is an extraordinary peculiar mysterious force of Maya. Desire is not subdued by satisfying it. Desire is subdued by transcending it, by overcoming it and by sublimating it into a higher channel. If you think every desire that arises in the heart spontaneously: 'let me satisfy it', you are making a sad mistake. You are not walking in light. You will soon find to your bitter cost that you have got yourself in an endless chain. Flowing along the stream is not the answer to the question. It is not the solution to this problem of desire. Flowing along the stream soon you will meet whirling begird. Only strength of self-control can help you to come out of this. You have to assert your higher nature. Giving way to the lower nature anyone can do. The jails of this world are filled with people who give way to their lower nature. It is nothing — it takes nothing. When desire arises immediately go into it. But man is not chaos. Man is made in the image of God.

Desire is a disease of the mind. Desire is a curse of the psyche. It is the pain of the deluded ego, false human personality, human individuality. Desire is Maya and Maya is desire. This disease has to be overcome. This is the whole of Yoga, whole of philosophy, whole of all the teachings of all the saints and seers. Overcome it. Be a hero and overcome this formidable enemy of desire. It is a formidable enemy. It requires exceptional strength. Avoid them even if you have to destroy it. To give in to desire is weakness. Therefore overcome it. Let us stop. That is Yoga. That is spirituality. That is inner strength. That is individuality. True reality. You are asserting Yourself. When the mind asserts itself, or senses assert themselves, or desires assert themselves, or the delusion of the intellect asserts itself, you are not asserting yourself. You are falling into a trap. You are distinct from that, absolutely different from that. Our beloved Gurudev chants: 'You are not this body, not this mind, immortal Self you are.' Day and night base yourself upon this great

truth. Base yourself upon this awareness. Never move even a hair's breadth away from this awareness, the central spiritual awareness. Ever be on the alert. Don't fall in the trap of the senses, the mind and the intellect. You cannot afford because desire is the outcome of a mixture of Rajas and Tamas, and as long as desire dominates your mind, senses take you like a puppet on the end of string. So, you can never have peace of mind because mind will be filled with Tamasic and Rajasic qualities.

Therefore, understand this law that true peace can only come into a mind that is at peace with itself, that has become refined and subtle, that has been wiped clean of the Tamasic and Rajasic qualities, — the desirous nature, the sense-nature. Where there is presence of Sattva there is purity of mind. Mind becomes subtle and refined. Peace comes. In that peace happiness or the supreme reality begins to ascend. Dharma lays down the pattern of life — a life of self-control, a life of discipline, a life of discrimination and renunciation, a life of the practice of virtues, of moderation, simplicity, self-restraint, purity and dispassion. That is the essence of Dharma and that is why Dharma becomes the spirit of life and the means for attaining God-realisation.

Books suggested for further study

1. All About Hinduism — Swami Sivananda
2. Unity of Religions — Swami Sivananda
